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# THE EVOLUTION OF KEATS'S POETRY

BY

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VOLUME I

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C. L. F.  
to  
M. B. F.



## PREFACE

THIS book is a biographical criticism rather than a critical biography. I have related only those facts of Keats's life which shed light upon his poems, and I have not related at all the final period of his life in which he was too ill to compose poems. I have based my interpretation of the evolution of his poetry upon the belief that poetry is the product of the reactions of a poet's mental faculties to the facts of his experience. I have attempted, therefore, to reconstruct the environment in which Keats lived and to present and explain the personal, social, political, religious, philosophical, and poetical forces which inspired and influenced his poems. I have made myself acquainted with Keats's friends through the existing records of their lives and I have read the books which he read. In order that I might reproduce and interpret the intuition which Keats expressed in a particular poem, I have attempted to put myself in his place and to subject myself to the sensations and ideas which entered into his mind and out of which he intuited the poem.

All of Keats's poems were composed within the brief period of six years, from the beginning of 1814 to the end of 1819, and almost all of his great poems were composed within the last three years of this period. The existing records of his poetry — his poems and letters and the letters, memoirs, and recollections of his friends — are so frank and complete that we are able to follow his actions and thoughts almost day by day in the period in which he composed his poems. His philosophy of poetry developed, with sudden and frequent reversions and alternations, with amazing rapidity. There is as much change and development in the six years in which he composed poetry as in the sixty-two years of Wordsworth's poetic composition. It is impossible, therefore, to formulate a consistent philosophy of poetry which applies to all of his poems. In no two of his long poems, and in very few of his short poems, did he express the same ideas of life and poetry. In each one of his poems, however, he expressed the ideas which he held on the day or days on which he composed it. I have interpreted his poems, therefore, in strict chronological order, tracing the evolution of his philosophy of poetry from day to day. I am aware, of course, that this chronological method has caused occasional repetition of material.

I have based my study of Keats's poetry upon manuscript material. I have quoted all the pertinent passages in this material

without alteration and correction; and I have given the name of the manuscript from which each passage is quoted. I am indebted, for permission to study and to take notes on manuscripts, to the Director of the British Museum; to the Librarian of the Hampstead Public Library; to the Marquess of Crewe and his secretary, Miss I. Corbett; and to Miss Belle da Costa Greene of the Pierpont Morgan Library. I am indebted also to the Librarian of the Harvard College Library for photostats of manuscripts in the Lowell Collection.

I am greatly indebted to the long line of biographers, editors, and critics who have preceded me in the study of Keats's poetry, the chief of whom are Richard Woodhouse, Lord Houghton, H. B. Forman, Sir Sidney Colvin, Miss Amy Lowell, J. M. Murry, Ernest de Sélincourt, and M. B. Forman. I am especially indebted to Woodhouse's great manuscript edition of Keats's poems, which has never been published. His Scrap-book is in the Pierpont Morgan Library and his Commonplace Book, Book of Transcripts of Keats's Poems, and Book of Transcripts of Keats's Letters are in the Library of the Marquess of Crewe. A few notes on manuscripts and a few sources of Keats's poems which I discovered six years ago have been discovered independently by other scholars and announced in magazines within the last year after the text of this book had been set up in type.

My study of Keats was inspired by Professor John Livingston Lowes of Harvard University, under whose direction I wrote in 1922 a dissertation on the influence of Shakespeare on Keats. I am greatly indebted to Professor Lowes for inspiration, for suggestions of the sources of Keats's poems, for the theory of the process of poetic composition, and for various principles and methods in my study of Keats's poetry. I have been encouraged in my work also by my friend and former teacher, Professor Walter Clyde Curry of Vanderbilt University.

C. L. F.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

*February 16, 1936*

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## CHAPTER I

### JUVENILE POEMS

#### I

THE poetry of John Keats, like that of every poet, is the product of the reaction of his poetic faculties to the facts of his experience. In every poem, we believe, the poet intuitively and expresses a fragment of his experience, giving it form and meaning. The mental, as well as the physical, faculties of a poet are inherited from his ancestors, and they are excited, informed, molded, and directed by the social, political, philosophical, religious, and poetical forces of the environment in which he is reared and in which he lives. If we would trace the evolution of Keats's poetry, as I propose to do, we must understand the qualities of his temperament and of his mind and the forces of his environment. The records of his parents are few and conflicting. The records of his early life are still few, but they are indubitable and significant. The records of his life from the autumn of 1816 to the autumn of 1819, the brief period of three years in which he composed all of his poems of intrinsic value, are so complete that we can study the genesis of his poems more exactly and more fruitfully than that of the poems of any other English poet.

Before considering the conflicting reports of the personalities of Keats's parents, we should recall the bare and indisputable facts of his parentage, birth, and childhood. (His father, Thomas Keats, was head ostler in a livery-stable which was kept by John Jennings at the sign of the Swan and Hoop, Finsbury Pavement, facing Lower Moorfields. Thomas Keats married Frances Jennings, the daughter of John Jennings, on Thursday, October 9, 1794, in Saint George's Church, Hanover Square. Shortly afterwards John Jennings surrendered the management of the livery-stable to Thomas Keats and retired to live in Ponder's End. Thomas Keats was twenty-six years of age at the time of his marriage and his bride, who was born in 1775, was nineteen. At first they resided at the livery-stable, but after three or four years they moved into a house in Craven Street, City Road, half a mile north of the stable.)

John Keats was born at the livery-stable either on October 29 or on October 31, 1795, and was baptized on December 18 in St.

Botolph's Church, Bishopsgate. His friends believed that he was born on October 29, but a marginal note on the baptismal register of St. Botolph's Church states that he was born on October 31. His brother George was born on February 28, 1797; his brother Thomas, on November 18, 1799; his brother Edward, who died in infancy, on April 28, 1801, and his sister, Frances Mary, on June 3, 1803.

When he was between seven and eight years of age, Keats and his brother George were placed in the Clarke School in Enfield, a boarding-school in which their mother's two brothers had been educated. On Sunday evening, April 15, 1804, his father, Thomas Keats, suffered an accident from which he died the following morning. This accident was described in *The Times* for Tuesday, April 17, as follows:

On Sunday Mr. Keats, livery stable keeper in Moorfields, went to dine at Southgate; he returned at a late hour, and on passing down the City-road, his horse fell with him, when he had the misfortune to fracture his skull. It was about one o'clock in the morning when the watchman found him, he was at that time alive, but speechless; the watchman got assistance, and took him to a house in the neighbourhood, where he died about 8 o'clock.

Less than a year after the death of Thomas Keats, his widow married William Rawlings, who gave up a clerkship in Smith Payson Co. and took charge of the livery-stable. On May 8, 1805 John Jennings died and Mrs. Jennings moved from Ponder's End to Church Street, Edmonton. After a little time, according to Richard Abbey, Mr. Rawlings died and Mrs. Rawlings, together with her younger children, Thomas and Frances Keats, sought refuge in the home of her mother in Edmonton. In the meantime Keats and his brother George had remained in the Clarke School in Enfield, and within a few years his brother Tom was placed in the same school.

The origins of Keats's family are still obscure; but Richard Abbey's recollections, which are now in the Lowell Collection in the Harvard College Library, reveal the birthplace of Mrs. Alice Jennings, Keats's maternal grandmother, and by so doing may lead investigators to further discoveries. Abbey told John Taylor that Mrs. Jennings was a native of the village of Colne at the foot of Pendlekill in Yorkshire. He did not say that Mr. Jennings was from the same village or from the same county, but implied that he was not from the same village. If Mr. Jennings were not a native of Yorkshire, he may have met and married Mrs. Jennings in London, whither she may have come, like the woman whom Abbey said she befriended, to enter service.

Neither the town nor the county in which Keats's father was born is known. The name Keats is widely distributed in various English

counties, Sir Sidney Colvin discovered, although it is not frequent in any. It may have been derived, Colvin suggested,<sup>1</sup> from the Middle English adjective "kete," a word of Scandinavian origin, meaning bold, gallant. It occurs in the various forms of Keyte, Keat, Keate, Keats, and Keates. Frances Keats, the poet's sister, remembered hearing as a child, Colvin said,<sup>2</sup> that her father came from Cornwall near Land's End. Charles Wentworth Dilke<sup>3</sup> and Charles Brown,<sup>4</sup> who were Keats's closest friends in 1818, 1819, and 1820, said that his father was "a Devonshire man." It is probable, in consideration of these traditions, that Thomas Keats was a native of one of the southwestern counties, but investigations in the parish registers of Dorset, Devon, and Cornwall have failed to discover his origin.

Keats and his brothers left no record of the origins of their family. The early deaths of their parents separated them from their distant relatives and drew them closer to one another. They had an ambition to exalt the family name, as Henry Stephens expressed it, but they looked into the future instead of into the past, striving to make their fortunes by their own abilities. In Keats's letters there is only one expression of interest in regard to his relatives.

Whilst I was in the Country last Summer [he wrote his sister Fanny on December 20, 1819] M<sup>rs</sup> Bentley tells me a woman in mour[n]ing call'd on me, — and talk'd something of an aunt of ours — I am so careless a fellow I did not enquire, but will particularly.<sup>5</sup>

This mention of his aunt arouses our curiosity but leaves it baffled and unsatisfied. She could not have been Mrs. Midgley John Jennings, the widow of his mother's brother; for she was, it is evident, a person with whom he had no connection or at least no recent connection. She was, I suggest, his father's sister.

Keats was remarkably reticent in regard to his parents, both in conversations with friends and in private letters to his brothers and sister. In his letters there is only one reference to his father and mother. "I seal," he wrote Fanny Brawne on July 25, 1819, "is mark'd like a family table cloth with my Mother's initial F for Fanny: put between my Father's initials." It is significant that Miss Brawne was the only correspondent to whom he mentioned his father and mother. (He was so devoted to his mother and re-

<sup>1</sup> Sir Sidney Colvin, *John Keats*, p. 3 *et seq*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Dilke's Memoir of Keats in Keats's copy of *Endymion*, Dilke Collection.

<sup>4</sup> Brown's Memoir of Keats, Houghton-Crewe Collection.

<sup>5</sup> This and all succeeding passages from Keats's letters are quoted from M. B. Forman's *The Letters of John Keats*, Oxford: University Press, 1931.

tained such painful memories of the tragic deaths of his father and mother that he could not bear to mention them to his friends and acquaintances. Except when he was composing poetry, he had a tendency to conceal his most intimate feelings. He did not tell his brothers that he had composed a sonnet in memory of his grandmother, to whom he was tenderly attached; and he strove to conceal his love for Miss Brawne from everyone. It is unnecessary, I am convinced, to conjecture that his silence in regard to his parents was due to shame either of his humble origins or of some scandal connected with his mother.

Keats's parents and grandparents, whatever their origins, were persons of superior abilities and intense ambition. John Jennings, his grandfather, amassed a fortune of over £30,000 by the management of his livery-stable.

My grandfather Mr. Jennings was very well off, as his will shows [George Keats wrote Charles Wentworth Dilke in April, 1828], and but that he was extremely generous and gullible would have been affluent. I have heard my grandmother speak with enthusiasm of his excellencies, and Mr. Abbey used to say that he never saw a woman of the talents and sense of my grandmother, except my mother.<sup>6</sup>

Mr. Jennings's two sons were educated in the Clarke School in Enfield. The younger, whose name we do not know, died in his youth. The elder, Midgley John Jennings, became an officer in the Royal Navy, attaining the rank of captain shortly before his death on October 8, 1808. Lieutenant Jennings, Charles Cowden Clarke said, was an officer in Admiral Duncan's ship in the battle with the Dutch off Camperdown.

After the battle, the Dutch Admiral, De Winter, pointing to young Jennings, told Duncan that he had fired several shots at that young man, and always missed his mark; — no credit to his steadiness of aim, for Jennings, like his own admiral, was considerably above the ordinary dimensions of stature.<sup>7</sup>

Keats's father and mother, like the other members of their family, were proud, ambitious, and able. Their marriage took place in a fashionable church in Hanover Square instead of in their own parish church and the removal of their residence from the livery-stable to the house in Craven Street are evidence of their desire to elevate the social status of their family. They had very little social and

<sup>6</sup> Sir Sidney Colvin, *John Keats*, p. 6. Many of the letters of George Keats are printed in H. B. Forman's Library Edition of Keats's Works, Vol. III, pp. 132-133, and Vol. IV, pp. 77-78, 116, and 382-419. Autograph MSS. of letters by George Keats to C. W. Dilke were owned by Miss Lowell and are now in the Harvard College Library.

<sup>7</sup> Clarke's recollections of Keats are quoted from his *Recollections of Writers* unless otherwise stated.

intellectual culture, it is probable, but they admired culture, and they were resolved that their children should have it. They desired to send their sons to Harrow, but being unable to afford the expense of a great public school they sent them to the Clarke School in Enfield. They visited their sons in the school and made a favorable impression upon John Clarke, the schoolmaster, and his son, Charles Cowden Clarke.

In the recollections of Keats which he wrote for Lord Houghton before 1848, Charles Cowden Clarke described Thomas Keats as follows:

I have a clear recollection of his lively and energetic countenance, particularly when seated on his gig and preparing to drive his wife home after visiting his sons at school. In feature, stature, and manner John resembled his father.

In the recollections of Keats which he published in 1861, 1874, and 1878 Clarke expanded his description of Keats's father and mother.

[Thomas Keats, he said, was] a man of so remarkably fine a commonsense, and native respectability, that I perfectly remember the warm terms in which his demeanor used to be canvassed by my parents after he had been to visit his boys. [John was the only one resembling him in person and feature, with brown hair and dark hazel eyes.] The father was killed by a fall from his horse in returning from a visit to the school. . . . His [John's] two brothers — George, older, and Thomas, younger than himself — were like the mother, who was tall, of good figure, with large oval face, and sensible deportment.

George Keats, writing Charles Wentworth Dilke on April 20, 1825, related his recollections of his father and mother.

My father was killed by a fall from his Horse [he said] and I remember nothing of him but that he had dark hair, I have heard him praised as a man of good sense and very much liked. My mother I distinctly remember, she resembled John very much in the Face, was extremely fond of him and humoured him in every whim, of which he had not a few, she was a most excellent and affectionate parent and as I thought a woman of uncommon talents, she was confined to her bed many years before her death by a rheumatism and at last died of a Consumption, she would have sent us to harrow school as I often heard her say, if she could have afforded.

In a letter to Dilke in April, 1828, George Keats added:

I do not remember much of my mother but her prodigality, and doting fondness for her children, particularly John, who resembled her in the face.

John Taylor, reporting Abbey's recollections, described Keats's mother as follows:

She was a handsome, but not a tall little woman. — Her features were of a superior good & regular, with the Exception of her Mouth which was unusually wide.

Keats's friends, after his death, obtained their knowledge of his parents from Clarke. On August 21, 1823 Richard Woodhouse wrote the following memorandum in his Scrap-book:

I dined at F. Salmon's with C. C. Clarke from whom I learned that J. K.'s father was ostler at the Swan & Hoop on the Pavement in Moorfields. He was a short thickset man like K. in height but stout. The name of the person who kept the Inn was Jennings, K's father married the Daughter. He was a man much above his sphere in life. The ch<sup>n</sup> were sent to C C C's Father's School at Edmonton — where the Father often went to see them. The Father died — afterwards the mother of a consumption — & the grandmother was very kind to them. John was her favorite.

Leigh Hunt related his recollections of Keats in *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries*, which he published in 1828. He was so very incurious, he said, that he did not know the facts of Keats's parentage "till the other day." He learned these facts doubtless from his intimate friend, Charles Cowden Clarke, who introduced Keats to him. He described personal traits of Keats's mother which Clarke did not mention in his recollections but which George Keats referred to in his letters to Dilke.

He [Keats] was a seven months' child: his mother, who was a lively woman, passionately fond of amusement, is supposed to have hastened her death by too great an inattention to hours and seasons. Perhaps she hastened that of her son.

In the absence of portraits of Keats's father and mother, it is impossible to decide which of them he most resembled in physical characteristics. The recollections which I have quoted show the usual difference of personal impressions. Woodhouse, reporting Clarke's reminiscences, said that Thomas Keats "was a short thickset man like K. in height but stout." Clarke said that Mrs. Keats was "tall," but Taylor, reporting Abbey's reminiscences, said that she was a "little woman." It is to be noted, however, that "not a tall," the first phrase which Taylor wrote down, is quite different in meaning from "little"; and it is possible that "not a tall woman" is the very phrase which Abbey used. There was, at least, large stature in her family; for Clarke said that her brother, Captain Midgley John Jennings, was "considerably above the ordinary dimensions of stature." Clarke said that Keats resembled his father in feature, stature, and manner, but George Keats said that Keats resembled his mother in face. One detail in Abbey's description of Mrs. Keats, her unusually wide mouth, supports George Keats's statement; for Keats's mouth, as his life masque shows, was unusually wide. Keats's hair was darker than his mother's, it is



probable, but not so dark as his father's. As for his stature, which was only five feet and three quarters of an inch, it was too subnormal to be an inheritance from either one of his parents.

Keats's physical appearance is vividly and consistently represented in the portraits which were made of him in his lifetime. The life masque, which was made, it is probable, by Benjamin Robert Haydon, reproduces his head in every detail. His profile is represented also in four silhouettes, one of which was made by Charles Brown, one by Charles Brown or Joseph Severn, one by Mrs. Leigh Hunt, and one, it has been suggested, by August Edouart, who made a silhouette of Fanny Brawne. There are also a profile drawing by Haydon in November 1816 and a three-quarter-face chalk drawing by William Hilton in 1819 or 1820. Severn made three portraits of Keats from life — a charcoal sketch in 1817, a miniature painting in the winter of 1818 or the spring of 1819, and an India ink drawing on January 28, 1821, three weeks before his death.

Keats's friends have left glowing records of the effect which his appearance made upon them. Their descriptions suggest, as the portraits do not, the pulsing stream of sensations, emotions, and thoughts which animated his physique in different moods. "His stature could have been very little more than five feet," Charles Cowden Clarke said, "but he was, withal, compactly made and well-proportioned; and before the hereditary disorder which carried him off began to show itself, he was active, athletic, and enduringly strong." "His shoulders were very broad for his size," Leigh Hunt said, "and his lower limbs were small in comparison with the upper, but neat and well-turned." Severn said that Keats seemed taller than he was, "partly from the perfect symmetry of his frame, partly from his erect attitude and a characteristic backward poise (sometimes a toss) of the head, and, perhaps more than anything else, from a peculiarly dauntless expression." The only times he seemed small of stature, Severn thought, "was when he was reading, or when he was walking, rapt in some deep reverie: when the chest fell in, the head bent forward as though weightily overburdened, and the eyes seemed almost to throw a light before the face." "One of his attitudes during familiar conversation," Clarke said, "was that of cherishing one leg over the knee of the other, smoothing the instep with the palm of his hand."

His "head . . . was remarkably small in the skull," Hunt said, "a singularity which he had in common with Lord Byron and Mr. Shelley, none of whose hats I could get on." (Hunt noted the "energy and sensibility" which were remarkably mingled in his

face. "Every feature was at once strongly cut, and delicately alive. If there was any faulty expression, it was in the mouth, which was not without something of a character of pugnacity. The face was rather long than otherwise; the upper lip projected a little over the under; the chin was bold, the cheeks sunken; the eyes mellow and glowing; large, dark and sensitive." "I do not particularly remember the thickness of the upper lip, which is so generally described and doubtless correctly," Bailey observed, "but the mouth struck me as too wide, both in itself and as out of harmony with the rest of the face, which, with this single blemish, was eminently beautiful. The eye was full and fine, and softened into tenderness, or beamed with a fiery brightness, according to the current of his thoughts and conversation." "His mouth was full and less intellectual than his other features," Mrs. Proctor said. "His countenance lives in my mind as one of singular beauty and brightness - it had an expression as if he had been looking on some glorious sight." "He was below the middle size," Haydon said, "with a low forehead, and an eye that had an inward look, perfectly divine, like a Delphian priestess who saw visions." "I can never forget the wine-like lustre of Keats's eyes," Severn said, "just like those of certain birds which habitually front the sun . . . They were like the hazel eyes of a wild gipsy-maid in colour, set in the face of a young god."

Keats's friends differed with one another in regard to the color of his eyes and hair. Mrs. Proctor, describing Keats for Lord Houghton, said that "his eyes were large and blue" and "his hair auburn." Clarke, protesting against Mrs. Proctor's description, said that Keats's eyes were "light hazel" and his hair "lightish brown and wavy." Severn, as we have seen, said that his eyes were "like the hazel eyes of a wild gipsy-maid in colour"; and Hunt said that "his hair, of a brown colour, was fine, and hung in natural ringlets." Georgiana Keats, correcting Mrs. Proctor's description, said that "his eyes were dark brown, large, soft, and expressive, and his hair a golden red." "His hair was beautiful," Bailey said, "a fine brown rather than auburn, I think; and if you placed your hand upon his head, the silken curls felt like the rich plumage of a bird." The specimens of his hair which are preserved in the Dilke and Morgan Collections are a golden reddish brown - a brown shot with gold and red—a mingled color which might impress one person as brown, another as red, and still another as golden. Clarke and Severn were correct, I believe, in describing his eyes as hazel, a mingled color which impressed Mrs. Proctor as blue and Georgiana Keats as brown.

Keats's physique, particularly in the character and alignment of forehead, nose, and chin, reminded his friends, as it does us, of the Greek ideal of manly beauty. "The form of his head," Bailey said, "was like that of a fine Greek statue;—and he realised to my mind the youthful Apollo, more than any head of a living man whom I have known." "A painter or a sculptor might have taken him for a study after the Greek masters," George Felton Mathew said, "and have given him 'a station like the herald Mercury, new lighted on some heaven-kissing Hill.' "

The most detailed record of the personalities of Keats's parents and grandparents is the gossip of Richard Abbey, wholesale tea and coffee merchant, whom Mrs. Jennings appointed to serve as the guardian of her grandchildren and the trustee of the estate which she and her husband left them. On April 19, 1827 John Taylor, who had been Keats's publisher and who was collecting materials for a biography of Keats, met Abbey at the Girdlers' Dinner in London and induced him to relate his reminiscences of Keats. The next day, April 20, Taylor wrote a memorandum of Abbey's recollections and sent it to his friend and adviser, Richard Woodhouse. I quote from a photostat of this memorandum which is now in the Lowell Collection in the Harvard College Library.

Waterloo Place 20 April 1827

John Keats was born in the Parish of St [blank space] His Mother was a singular Character & from her he may be supposed to derive whatever was ~~of a~~ peculiar in his Mind & Disposition. — She was the Daughter of — Jennings, a Livery stable Keeper, in Moorfields ~~where~~ He lived next door to the Moorgate Coffee House on the Pavement, ~~Moorfields~~. — His Temper appears to have influenced that of his Daughter. — He was excessively fond of the pleasures of the Table, and for 4 Days in the Week his Wife & Maid were occupied in preparing for the Sunday's Dinner. He was a complete Gourmand: — His Daughter in this respect somewhat resembled him, but she was more remarkably the Slave of these appetites, attributable probably to this for their exciting Cause. — At an early Age she told my Informant, M<sup>r</sup> Abby, that she must & would have a Husband; and her passions were so ardent, he said, that it was dangerous to be alone with her. — She was a handsome, ~~but not a tall~~ little woman. — Her Features were ~~of a superior~~ good & regular, with the Exception of her Mouth which was unusually wide. A little Circumstance was mentioned to me as indicative of her Character — She used to go to a Grocers in Bishopsgate Street, opposite the church, probably out of Some Liking for the Owner of the Shop, — and the Man remarked to M<sup>r</sup> Abby that Miss Jennings always came in dirty Weather, & when She went away, She held up her Clothes very high on crossing the Street, & to be sure, says the Grocer, she has uncommonly handsome *Legs*. — He was not however fatally wounded by Cupid the Parthian —

But it was not long before she found a Husband, nor did she go far for him — a Helper in her Father's Stables appeared sufficiently desirable in her Eyes to make her forget the Disparity of their Circumstances, & ~~she~~ it was not long be-

fore John Keats had the Honor to be united to his Master's Daughter. -- He did not present or display any great accomplishments. -- Elevated perhaps in his habits by the sudden Rise of his Fortunes he thought it became him to act somewhat more the Man of Consequence than he had been accustomed to do -- but it was still in the Way of his Profession -- He kept a remarkably fine Horse for his own Riding, & on Sundays would go out with others who prided themselves in the like Distinction, to Highgate, Highbury, or some other places of public Entertainment for Man & Horse. -- At length one Sunday Night -- he was returning with some of his jolly Companions from a Carouse at one of these Places, riding very fast, & most probably very much in Liquor, when his Horse leaped upon the Pavement opposite the ~~Wesleyan~~ Methodist chapel in the City Road, & falling with him against the Iron Railings so dreadfully crushed him that he died as they were carrying him Home.

I think it was not much more than 8 Months after this Event that M<sup>rs</sup> Keats again being determined to have a Husband, married M<sup>r</sup> Rawlins, a Clerk in Smith Payson Co's -- I knew very little of him, further than that he would have had a Salary of 700£ a year eventually had he continued in his Situation -- I suppose therefore that he quitted it on becoming the Proprietor of the Livery stables by his Marriage with M<sup>rs</sup> Keats, but how long the concern was carried on, or at what period M<sup>r</sup> Jennings died, or relinquished it, I didn't learn -- It is perhaps sufficient to know that Rawlins also died after some little Time, and that his Widow was afterwards living as the Wife of a Jew at Enfield, named Abrahams.

M<sup>rs</sup> Jennings the Grandmother of John Keats, the Poet, was living after the Death of her Husband at Edmonton, & here she took care of the children of her unhappy Daughter, who after the Death of her first Husband, ~~then~~ became addicted to drinking and in the love of the Brandy Bottle found a temporary Gratification to those inordinate appetites which seem to have been in one Stage or other constantly soliciting her. -- The Growth of this degrading Propensity to liquor may account perhaps for the strange Irregularities -- or rather Immorality of her after-life -- I should imagine that her children seldom saw her, and would hope that they knew not all her Conduct. The Grandmother was a very different Kind of Woman, & when left to herself appears to have acted the part of a discreet Parent to the children. -- One of Keats's most beautiful Sonnets is addressed to his Grandmother. It might be thought that he was speaking of a young and beautiful Woman, so actively had her goodness & affection filled him with pure & finest Love for her --

She was a Native of Yorkshire, born in the Village of Colne at the Foot of Pendlekill. -- From the same Village came M<sup>r</sup> Abby, who was the Guardian of these children, and my Informant in these Particulars. He appears to have had a real Friendship for M<sup>rs</sup> Jennings & to have been a sincere well-wisher to the Family, but his Views & those of the young Men as they grew up were not at all accordant. His care of the Grand children of his Towns woman was not a solitary Instance of his Desire to serve those who had the claim of a common Country & Birthplace to plead as a Passport to his Favor. One Day M<sup>rs</sup> Jennings was visited by a young Woman who came from Colne, but was then in service as a lady's Maid -- This young Person subsequently married, & lived near M<sup>rs</sup> Jennings, who exceeded the usual offices of a friendly Neighbour ~~when~~, but greater Calls were soon after made upon her. This young Woman, who was a delicate sensible Creature was murdered by her Husband. -- He laid her dead at his Feet by a Blow of his Fist, -- and when M<sup>rs</sup> Jennings who was sent for arrived,

she saw a little girl 2 years old playing about the Room quite naked, unconscious of course of its Mother's Fate, and a Boy not more than 2 or 3 Months old in his Cradle. — She sent for M<sup>r</sup> Abby and said that if he would take charge of the Girl till the Parents of their late Mother should come to take them, she would provide in the meantime for the Boy — Abby cheerfully consented & brought the little creature home to his Wife. At the End of a Month the old Grandmother arrived in London to take the children, and the Boy was given up to her, but the little Girl was requested to be left till an Opportunity which would soon occur afforded them the means of sending her safely to Colne in the Care of another Friend. — When that Time came however M<sup>rs</sup> Abby was grown so fond of the child that she could not bear to part with her. — The old Grandmother was easily persuaded to let her stay and she is at this moment with M<sup>r</sup> Abby having been brought up by him as a Daughter. — She was the playmate of the young Family of the Keats's and seemed always cheerful & happy till of late when she has drooped & pined: They are afraid she is going into a Decline, but M<sup>r</sup> Abby suspects that she has become acquainted with the unhappy Story of her real Parents, & that silent Grief is consuming her Health & Spirits —

With so kind hearted a Man as Abby some children would have been very happy, but he was not the Man for these, especially for John Keats who seems to have given him nearly the same kind of unavailing anxiety which the Ducklings caused the old Hen who hatched them. —

[I omit a passage which I shall quote later.]

Abby is a large ~~fat~~ stout good natured looking Man with a great Piece of Benevolence standing out on the Top of his Forehead. — As he spoke of the Danger of being alone with Miss Jennings I looked to see if I discern any of the Lineaments of the young Poet in his Features, but if I had heard the whole of his Story I should have banished the Thought more speedily than it was conceived. — Never were there two people more opposite than the Poet & this good Man. — He appeared at the Girdlers' Dinner yesterday introduced by M<sup>r</sup> Macauley, who when he ~~first~~ saw him enter the Room scarcely knew him. The Reason was this, he had that Day put on Trousers for the first Time, having worn till then white cotton Stockings & Breeches & half Boots. — When ~~he said~~ for a long Time there had been no other Man on the Exchange in that Dress, & he was become so conspicuous for it as to ~~find him~~ be an Object of attention in the Streets, he had at last ~~had~~ resolved to ~~be in the~~ come into the Fashion.

Taylor, who was a bigoted moralist but an honest man, was deceived by Abbey's profession of benevolence and morality. He had little insight into human character, but he knew it, and in his relations with Keats, as we shall see, he relied upon the sympathetic insight of his friend, Richard Woodhouse. Deceived by Abbey's profession of benevolence, he believed Abbey's slander of Keats's parents. He found Abbey's recollections of the latter part of Keats's life so inaccurate, however, that he made no note of them.

This is the whole of what he told me respecting John Keats, excepting such Particulars as I was better acquainted with perhaps than he himself — He added that George was working like a Turk in America & that Miss K was just married to a Spaniard. (I have since heard that his Name is Llanos.

Abbey had a better opportunity than any other person to know the facts about Keats's parents, his childhood, and indeed the greater part of his life. Abbey's recollections, however, must be accepted with reservations. In the first place, his slander of John Jennings, Thomas Keats, and Frances Jennings Keats is refuted by the indubitable records of their pride, ambition, and achievements. In the second place, it is refuted by the testimony of Charles Cowden Clarke and George Keats. In the third place, the smug and malicious tone of his recollections causes us to discount his slander, which consists in his interpretations of incidents rather than in the incidents themselves. In the fourth place, the petty tyranny which he evinced as guardian of John, George, Thomas, and Frances Keats causes us to distrust his personal estimates of the characters of their parents.

Abbey's dislike of John Jennings and his daughter, Mrs. Keats, had its origin in incompatibility of temperament. He was a hard-headed, practical, self-made merchant of north country stock. He was a prosperous merchant, it seems, but he muddled the affairs of the Jennings estate of which he was trustee. He was a bigoted puritan, holding himself and those in his charge to a rigid observance of his middle-class moral conventions. The suppression of his instincts, which were strong within him, made him self-righteous and prurient-minded. He disliked John Jennings and Frances Jennings because they were high-spirited and generous; and he fed his salacious mind with suspicions of their intemperance and immorality. His story of spying upon Frances Jennings' actions and discussing her legs with a neighborhood grocer is evidence of his own prurience rather than of her licentiousness. He was also a hypocrite, for Mrs. Jennings, who appointed him guardian of her grand children, had no suspicion, we may be sure, of his dislike of her husband and daughter. He carried his hypocrisy to the extent of telling George Keats that he thought that George's mother was a woman of talents and sense.

Abbey was unsympathetic, dictatorial, and petty-minded in his relations with his wards. He approved of George, who, like Mrs. Jennings, was sober and practical, and disliked John and Tom, who, like their mother, were high-spirited and impractical. He apprenticed Keats to a surgeon and was deeply offended because Keats refused to practise surgery. He despised poetry, and treated Keats's poems with brutal ridicule. He regarded Keats and his brother Tom as immoral rebels; and when Tom was dying of consumption, and afterwards when Keats was ill with the same disease, it was with

great difficulty that he was persuaded to permit their sister, who was in his charge, to visit them. He persecuted Fanny Keats with petty restrictions, made her get rid of her dog, and, as she told her brother George in January 1820, frowned upon her smiling and talking at the dinner table. Mrs. Abbey abbetted her husband in restricting and persecuting Fanny Keats. On January 5, 1818 Keats wrote his brothers:

I have seen Fanny twice lately. . . . M<sup>rs</sup> Abbey was saying that the Keatses were ever indolent — that they would ever be so and that it was born in them — Well whispered fanny to me If it is born with us how can we help it.

“You must pay no attention to M<sup>rs</sup> Abbey’s unfeeling and ignorant gabble,” Keats wrote his sister on February 27, 1819. In the early part of 1820 she appealed to him to remove her from Abbey’s control, but he was too ill at that time to help her. He advised her to console herself and said: “Be sure . . . that beyond the obligations that a Lodger may have to a Landlord you have none to M<sup>r</sup> Abbey. Let the surety of this make you laugh at M<sup>rs</sup> A’s foolish tattle.”

Taylor, believing Abbey’s slander of Keats’s parents, decided that Abbey’s recollections were not proper materials for a biography of Keats. At the end of his memorandum of Abbey’s recollections, Taylor wrote Woodhouse:

My dear Rich<sup>d</sup>

These are not Materials for a Life of our poor Friend which it will do to communicate to the World — they are too wretched to be “told by a Cavern wind unto a Forest old” — How strange it was that such a Creature of the Element as he should have sprung from such gross Realities. — But how he refined upon the Immoralities of his Parents! Yours

My dear Fellow

Very truly John Taylor

April 23 1827

Abbey’s recollections, with proper reservations, are invaluable for a study of the origins of Keats’s temperament and mind. We can accept many of the incidents which he related, but we must discount his interpretation of these incidents. He related several facts of which there is no other record: that Mrs. Alice Jennings was a native of the village of Colne in Yorkshire; that she was a kindly woman who assisted unfortunate neighbors; that Mrs. Keats married William Rawlings not much more than eight months after the death of Thomas Keats; that Mr. Rawlings was a clerk in Smith

Payson Co.; that he took charge of the livery-stable after his marriage to Mrs. Keats, and that he died after some little time.

One incident which Abbey related to Taylor, that Mrs. Rawlings after the death of Mr. Rawlings lived as the wife of an Enfield Jew, is a perversion of fact. In the first place, such conduct as this is contrary to her character. She was impulsive, emotional, pleasure-loving, and, it is probable, highly sexed, but she was also intelligent, proud, and ambitious. In the second place, if she had lived as the wife of the Enfield Jew, Charles Cowden Clarke and George Keats would have concealed this disgraceful conduct but would not have spoken of her with respect. We can reconstruct the facts of her life, I believe, as follows. Thomas Keats, her first husband, died on April 16, 1804. Not much more than eight months after this event, Abbey said, she married William Rawlings, who also died "after some little time." After the death of Mr. Rawlings, I presume, she employed the Enfield Jew to manage the livery-stable; but she abandoned it in a short time, it is probable, for she passed the last years of her life in the home of her mother in Edmonton, dying of consumption in February 1810. George Keats said that she was "confined to her bed many years before her death by a rheumatism." Abbey, with his prurient mind, perverted this record of her life by suspecting that the Enfield Jew whom she employed to manage the livery-stable was her lover.

The ways of heredity, which are devious and unfathomable in most persons, seem simple and clear in John Keats. He inherited in a fortunate combination those strongly contrasting characteristics which existed in separation in his parents. Like his mother and grandfather, he was sensuous and emotional, reveling in sensations, receiving either extreme pleasure or extreme pain from the facts of experience, reacting with startling suddenness from one extreme of emotion to the other, from the extreme of hope to that of despair and from the extreme of joy to that of grief. Like his father and grandmother, on the other hand, he was rational, volitional, and ethical, analyzing himself and others with honesty and truth, speculating about the facts of experience with clear objectivity, and controlling his impulses and governing his actions in accordance with liberal but firm ethical principles. In addition to these faculties which he inherited from his parents, he possessed a creative imagination, which enabled him to intuit and express his sensuous, emotional, and intellectual experience in the objective form of poetry and which, by so doing, enabled him to relieve himself of the turmoil of experience and gain a temporary peace and happiness.



Perhaps his creative imagination was engendered in the union of strong sensuous and emotional faculties with equally strong intellectual faculties.

## 2

The death of Keats's father in 1804, the death of his grandfather in 1805, the remarriage of his mother, the death of his stepfather, the illness of his mother, the death of his uncle in 1808, and the death of his mother in 1810—these circumstances deprived him of the advantages or the disadvantages of a home. Except for brief vacations in the home of his aged grandmother in Edmonton, he passed his boyhood in the Clarke School in Enfield from 1803 to 1811—that is, from his seventh or eighth to his sixteenth year. In the Clarke School instead of in the home of his parents, therefore, we must study the cultural forces which molded his character, informed his mind, and inspired his poetic genius.

It is important to bear in mind that the environment of Keats's boyhood was rural and academic instead of urban and cockney. The natural beauty of the countryside around Enfield and Edmonton, which were ten miles from London, had not been impaired in the early part of the nineteenth century by the encroachments of the great city.

Dear old Enfield [Charles Cowden Clarke said] is the very *beau-ideal* of an English village. Green, picturesque, brightened by the winding New River, it is one of the most beautiful of miniature towns, and may vie with Shakespearian Stratford-on-Avon itself, or artistic Dulwich, for charm of natural attraction. . . .

The house [in which the school was kept] had been built by a West India merchant in the latter end of the seventeenth or beginning of the eighteenth century. It was of the better character of the domestic architecture of that period, the whole front being of the purest red brick, wrought by means of moulds into rich designs of flowers and pomegranates, with heads of cherubim over niches in the centre of the building. . . .

The house, airy, roomy, and substantial, with a good allowance of appertaining land, was especially fitted for a school. "The eight-bedded room," "the six-bedded room," as they were called, give some idea of the dimensions of the apartments. The school-room, which occupied the site where formerly had been the coach-house and stabling, was forty feet long; and the playground was a spacious courtyard between the school-room and the house. . . .

From the playground stretched a garden, one hundred yards in length, where in one corner were some small plots set aside for certain boys fond of having a little garden of their own, that they might cultivate according to their individual will and pleasure; and farther on was a sweep of greensward, beyond the centre of which was a pond, sometimes dignified as "The Lake." . . . Round this pond sloped strawberry-beds, the privilege of watering which was awarded to "assiduous boys" on summer evenings, with the due understanding that they would

have their just share of the juicy red berries when fully ripe. At the far end of the pond — and in those boyish days it seemed indeed "far" . . . beneath the iron railings which divided our premises from the meadows beyond, whence the song of the nightingales in May would reach us in the stillness of night, there stood a rustic arbour, where John Keats and I used to sit and read Spenser's "Faery Queene" together, when he had left school, and used to come over from Edmonton, where he was apprenticed to Thomas Hammond the surgeon. On the other side of the house lay a small enclosure which we called "the drying-ground," and where was a magnificent old morella cherry-tree against a wall well exposed to the sun. Beyond this, a gate led into a small field, or paddock, of two acres, — the pasture-ground of two cows that supplied the establishment with fresh and abundant milk.

It was a domain of almost boundless extent and magnificence to the imagination of a schoolboy; and it really did possess solid excellences.<sup>8</sup>

The Clarke School, a private academy of seventy or eighty boys, had the advantages of a home as well as those of a school. Keats was far happier in this pleasant environment than he would have been in the more rigorous environment of a public school, such as Harrow, to which his parents had aspired to send him. The discipline of the school was enlightened and humane. There was no system of corporal punishment, and above all no fagging. John Clarke, the master, induced his boys to study by means of a system of merits and demerits, in accordance with which he distributed prizes at the end of each half-year. The curriculum was elementary and practical; for the students intended to enter the petty trades; but John Clarke encouraged a voluntary reading of Latin and French by offering books as first, second, and third prizes.

The story of Keats's boyhood in the Clarke School has been related by Charles Cowden Clarke, the son of his schoolmaster, and Edward Holmes, a fellow-student. Clarke, who was born on December 15, 1787, was old enough to be Keats's teacher and young enough to be his friend. In the early part of his residence in the Clarke School, Clarke said, Keats gave no extraordinary indications of intellect. His energies were absorbed in games and fisticuffs; and, since he lived in the stirring days of the Napoleonic wars, his admiration was attracted by feats of strength and courage. The object of his hero-worship was his uncle, Captain Midgley John Jennings, who had distinguished himself in the naval battle with the Dutch off Camperdown. The fame of Captain Jennings, who was an alumnus of the Clarke School, gave Keats and his brothers considerable prestige in the eyes of their fellow-students.

<sup>8</sup> C. C. Clarke, "The School-House of Keats at Enfield," *St. James Holiday Annual* for 1875. Forman, Library Edition, Vol. IV, pp. 341-345. The second paragraph of the quotation, however, is taken from Clarke's *Recollections of Writers*, p. 120.

Keats was in childhood not attached to books [Edward Holmes said]. His *penchant* was for fighting. He would fight any one — morning, noon, and night, his brother among the rest. It was meat and drink to him. Jennings their sailor relation was always in the thoughts of the brothers, and they determined to keep up the family reputation for courage; George in a passive manner; John and Tom more fiercely. The favourites of John were few; after they were known to fight readily he seemed to prefer them for a sort of grotesque and buffoon humour. I recollect at this moment his delight at the extraordinary gesticulations and pranks of a boy named Wade who was celebrated for this. . . . He was a boy whom any one from his extraordinary vivacity and personal beauty might easily fancy would become great — but rather in some military capacity than in literature. You will remark that this taste came out rather suddenly and unexpectedly. Some books of his I remember reading were *Robinson Crusoe* and something about Montezuma and the Incas of Peru. He must have read Shakespeare as he thought that “no one would care to read *Macbeth* alone in a house at two o’clock in the morning.” This seems to me a boyish trait of the poet. His sensibility was as remarkable as his indifference to be thought well of by the master as a “good boy” and to his tasks in general. . . . He was in every way the creature of passion . . . The point to be chiefly insisted on is that he was *not literary* — *his love of books and poetry manifested itself chiefly about a year before he left school*. In all active exercises he excelled. The generosity and daring of his character with the extreme beauty and animation of his face made I remember an impression on me — and being some years his junior I was obliged to woo his friendship — in which I succeeded, but not till I had fought several battles. This violence and vehemence — this pugnacity and generosity of disposition — in passions of tears or outrageous fits of laughter — always in extremes — will help to paint Keats in his boyhood. Associated as they were with an extraordinary beauty of person and expression, these qualities captivated the boys, and no one was more popular. [Houghton-Crewe Collection. Quoted by Sir Sidney Colvin, pp. 11-12]

Clarke, like Holmes, described Keats as impulsive and pugnacious but generous.

He was a favourite with all. Not the less beloved was he for having a highly pugnacious spirit, which, when roused, was one of the most picturesque exhibitions — off the stage — I ever saw. One of the transports of that marvellous actor, Edmund Kean — whom, by the way, he idolized — was its nearest resemblance; and the two were not very dissimilar in face and figure. Upon one occasion, when an usher, on account of some impertinent behaviour, had boxed his brother Tom’s ears, John rushed up, put himself in the received posture of offence, and, it was said, struck the usher — who could, so to say, have put him into his pocket. His passion at times was almost ungovernable; and his brother George, being considerably the taller and stronger, used frequently to hold him down by main force, laughing when John was in “one of his moods,” and was endeavouring to beat him. It was all, however, a wisp-of-straw conflagration; for he had an intensely tender affection for his brothers, and proved it upon the most trying occasions. He was not merely the “favourite of all,” like a pet prize-fighter, for his terrier courage; but his high-mindedness, his utter unconsciousness of a mean motive, his placability, his generosity, wrought so general a feeling in his behalf,

that I never heard a word of disapproval from any one, superior or equal, who had known him.

Keats was supernormal, as are all men of genius, but he was not abnormal, as some men of genius, such as Shelley, are. The only quality in which he verged upon the abnormal was a strain of morbidity which, at infrequent intervals, made him subject to moods of melancholy and suspicion.

From the time we were boys at school [George Keats said], where we loved, jangled, and fought alternately, until we separated in 1818, I in a great measure relieved him by continual sympathy, explanation, and inexhaustible spirits and good humour, from many a bitter fit of hypochondriasm. He avoided teasing any one with his miseries but Tom and myself, and often asked our forgiveness, venting and discussing them gave him relief.<sup>9</sup>

The awakening of Keats's intellectual faculties was sudden and unexpected. It occurred, Clarke estimated, about eighteen months before he left school. "His love of books and poetry manifested itself," Holmes said, "about a year before he left school." Miss Lowell suggested<sup>10</sup> that his mind was shocked into activity by the intense grief which he suffered at the death of his mother in February 1810. He was passionately devoted to his mother, who, George Keats said, "was extremely fond of him and humoured him in every whim." She was confined to her bed many years by rheumatism before she died of consumption, the disease to which Keats and his brother Tom were destined to succumb. During her last illness, Benjamin Robert Haydon said, Keats "sat up whole nights with her in a great chair, would suffer nobody to give her medicine, or even cook her food, but himself, and read novels to her in her intervals of ease." After her death, Clarke said, "he gave way to such impassioned and prolonged grief (hiding himself in a nook under the master's desk) as awakened the liveliest pity and sympathy in all who saw him."

In July 1810, five months after the death of Mrs. Rawlings, Mrs. Jennings, who was seventy-four years of age, took steps to provide for her young grandchildren. "In consideration of the natural love and affection which she had for them," she made a will, leaving them the greater part of her property and appointing two guardians, Richard Abbey and Rowland Sandell, to take immediate charge of them. After a few years Sandell either died or resigned his trust and Abbey became the sole guardian of the Keats children.

<sup>9</sup> George Keats's letter to Dilke. Autograph manuscript, Harvard College Library. H. B. Forman, *Library Edition*, Vol. IV, p. 403.

<sup>10</sup> Amy Lowell, *John Keats*, Vol. I, pp. 38-39.

After his mental faculties had been awakened, Keats applied them to a study of his school assignments with that intense energy which was characteristic of his nature.

My father [Clarke said] was in the habit, at each half-year's vacation of bestowing prizes upon those pupils who had performed the greatest quantity of voluntary work; and such was Keats's indefatigable energy for the last two or three successive half-years of his remaining at school, that, upon each occasion, he took the first prize by a considerable distance. He was at work before the first school-hour began, and that was at seven o'clock; almost all the intervening times of recreation were so devoted; and during the afternoon holidays, when all were at play, he would be in the school — almost the only one — at his Latin or French translation; and so unconscious and regardless was he of the consequences of so close and persevering an application, that he never would have taken the necessary exercise had he not been sometimes driven out for the purpose by one of the masters

Keats refined and exalted his boyish zest for games and fisticuffs into a love for stories of classical mythology, travels and voyages, and heroes who had fought in the cause of liberty. Clarke's list of the books which Keats read in the Clarke School is a valuable document for a study of the forces that infused and shaped his mind and of the materials out of which he formed his poetry.

In the latter part of the time — perhaps eighteen months — that he remained at school, he occupied the hours during meals in reading. Thus, his *whole* time was engrossed. He had a tolerably retentive memory, and the quantity that he read was surprising. He must in those last months have exhausted the school library, which consisted principally of abridgments of all the voyages and travels of any note; Mavor's collection, also his "Universal History," Robertson's histories of Scotland, America, and Charles the Fifth; all Miss Edgeworth's productions, together with many other works equally well calculated for youth. The books, however, that were his constantly recurrent sources of attraction were Tooke's "Pantheon," Lemprière's "Classical Dictionary," which he appeared to *learn*, and Spence's "Polymetis." This was the store whence he acquired his intimacy with the Greek mythology; here was he "suckled in that creed outworn;" for his amount of classical attainment extended no farther than the "Aeneid;" with which epic, indeed, he was so fascinated that before leaving school he had *voluntarily* translated in writing a considerable portion. And yet I remember that at that early age — mayhap under fourteen — notwithstanding, and through all its incidental attractiveness, he hazarded the opinion to me (and the expression riveted my surprise), that there was feebleness in the structure of the work. He must have gone through all the better publications in the school library, for he asked me to lend him some of my own books; and, in my "mind's eye," I now see him at supper (we had our meals in the schoolroom), sitting back on the form, from the table, holding the folio volume of Burnet's "History of his Own Time" between himself and the table, eating his meal from beyond it.

At the end of the midsummer term of 1811, when Keats had very nearly completed his sixteenth year, he was withdrawn from the

Clarke School by his guardian, Richard Abbey, and apprenticed to Thomas Hammond, a surgeon and apothecary at Edmonton. The date of his withdrawal from the school is established by inscriptions in books which were given to him. One of the books, Bonnycastle's *Introduction to Astronomy*, is inscribed, "Assigned as a reward of Merit to Mr John Keats at Mr. Clarke's Enfield Mids 1811." The other book, Ovid's *Metamorphoseon*, which Charles Cowden Clarke probably gave him as a mark of friendship, is inscribed, "John Keats emer: 1812." George Keats was withdrawn from the school at the same time and placed in the counting-room of his guardian, Richard Abbey, 4 Pancras Lane, London.

Keats did not choose surgery as his career; but, it is probable, he did not object to it, for he was not yet aware of his poetic genius. His apprenticeship to the surgeon and apothecary in Edmonton, Clarke thought, gave him evident satisfaction. Surgery was the only profession which he could hope to enter with his elementary education and limited income. It was inferior in rank to learned professions, such as medicine, but it was superior to the trades for which his fellow-students were preparing themselves. Edmonton, which was only two miles from Enfield, was a desirable place of residence in his eyes. His grandmother and sister were living in Edmonton; his brother Tom was still in the Clarke School in Enfield; and, since the duties of his apprenticeship were by no means onerous, he could continue to study and to read under the guidance of his friend, Charles Cowden Clarke. During his apprenticeship, Clarke said, he completed his translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

The distance between our residences being so short [Clarke added], I gladly encouraged his inclination to come over when he could claim a leisure hour; and in consequence I saw him about five or six times a month on my own leisure afternoons. He rarely came empty-handed; either he had a book to read, or brought one to be exchanged. When the weather permitted, we always sat in an arbour at the end of a spacious garden, and in Boswellian dialect "we had a good talk."

In September 1816, after Keats had chosen poetry as his profession, he wrote a poetic *Epistle to Charles Cowden Clarke*, in which he summed up the source, the character, and the extent of his poetic education in Enfield and Edmonton. In this epistle he drew a charming picture of his visits with Clarke in Enfield:

... I have walk'd with you through shady lanes  
That freshly terminate in open plains,  
And revel'd in a chat that ceased not  
When at night-fall among your books we got;

No, nor when supper came, nor after that, —  
 Nor when reluctantly I took my hat;  
 No, nor till cordially you shook my hand  
 Mid-way between our homes: — your accents bland  
 Still sounded in my ears, when I no more  
 Could hear your footsteps touch the grav'ly floor.  
 Sometimes I lost them, and then found again;  
 You chang'd the footpath for the grassy plain.  
 In those still moments I have wish'd you joys  
 That well you know to honour — "Life's very toys  
 "With him," said I, "will take a pleasant charm;  
 "It cannot be that ought will work him harm."

Keats not only read poetry with Clarke in the old arbor in the grounds of the Clarke School, but also walked with him through the beautiful countryside around Enfield,

through shady lanes  
 That freshly terminate in open plains . . .

He reacted to the natural beauty of his environment with the unconscious delight of a boy. He was oblivious to the wealth of poetic matter that lay in profusion around him. He drew the imagery of the poems which he composed in Edmonton from the poetry of Spenser and Milton, for he learned the art of poetic composition from the imitative poets of the eighteenth century. He absorbed natural sensations, however, and filled his memory with a store of natural images, although he was unconscious that he was doing so. When he adopted the natural style of Leigh Hunt and Wordsworth, after he had left Edmonton to reside in London, he drew much of his imagery from the store of natural impressions in his memory.

In his epistle to Clarke, Keats acknowledged generously the debt which he owed to Clarke:

Ah! had I never seen,  
 Or known your kindness, what might I have been?  
 What my enjoyments in my youthful years,  
 Bereft of all that now my life endears?

A poet is made as well as born. He is the combined product, as Shelley observed, of the internal faculties with which he is endowed by nature and the external influences which excite, sustain, and direct these faculties. Keats would have been a poet of some sort or other under any circumstances, but if he had not known Clarke he would have been a different poet from that which he was. Clarke brought Keats under the influence of those social, political, religious, and poetic forces which determined the substance and style of his

juvenile poems. By means of Clarke's recollections and Keats's epistle to Clarke, we can set the poems which Keats composed in Edmonton in their place in the poetic movements of their age.

Clarke was a liberal in politics and in religion. He belonged to a group of young Englishmen who loved liberty and advocated reform in government in spite of the frantic conservatism into which England had been frightened by the Reign of Terror in France.

[Burnet's *History of my Own Time*] and Leigh Hunt's *Examiner* — which my father took in, and I used to lend to Keats — [Clarke said] no doubt laid the foundation of his love of civil and religious liberty. He once told me, smiling, that one of his guardians, being informed what books I had lent him to read, declared that if he had fifty children he would not send one of them to that school.

In the epistle to Clarke, Keats said:

You too upheld the veil from Cho's beauty,  
And pointed out the patriot's stern duty;  
The might of Alfred, and the shaft of Tell;  
The hand of Brutus, that so grandly fell  
Upon a tyrant's head.

Clarke also taught Keats to love music. It was his custom to play on the pianoforte in the evening after the schoolboys had gone to bed. Several years afterwards, when Keats was reading the manuscript of *The Eve of St. Agnes* to Clarke, he commented upon the passage in which he described Porphyro listening to the midnight music in the hall below:

The hall door shuts again, and all the noise is gone. . . .

"That line," Keats said, "came into my head when I remembered how I used to listen in bed to your music at school." In the epistle to Clarke, Keats alluded to the composers whose compositions he had heard Clarke play:

my heart  
Was warm'd luxuriously by divine Mozart;  
By Arne delighted, or by Handel madden'd;  
Or by the song of Erin pierc'd and sadden'd:  
What time you were before the music sitting,  
And the rich notes to each sensation fitting.

Clarke, above all, guided and directed Keats in the reading of those poems by which he was inspired to compose poetry and from which he learned the art of poetic composition. In the epistle to Clarke, Keats mentioned several of the great poems which he had read with him -- Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Shakespeare's *A Mid-*



*summer Night's Dream*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (in Fairfax's translation). Clarke, describing Keats's emotional reaction to poetry, said:

It was a treat to see as well as hear him read a pathetic passage. Once, when reading the "Cymbeline" aloud, I saw his eyes fill with tears, and his voice faltered when he came to the departure of Posthumus, and Imogen saying she would have watched him —

'Till the diminution  
Of space had pointed him sharp as my needle;  
Nay follow'd him till he had *melted from*  
*The smallness of a gnat to air*; and then  
Have turn'd mine eye and wept

Clarke, I presume, italicized the image "Melted from the smallness of a gnat to air" because it had impressed Keats.

The enthusiasm with which Clarke and Keats read Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton was inspired by the romantic movement of the eighteenth century, the first stage of which was a revival of the genres of Renaissance poetry. On the basis of style, we can classify the romantic poets of the eighteenth century into the school of Spenser, the school of Shakespeare, the school of Milton, the school of the ballad, and the school of the ode. In the epistle to Clarke, Keats defined the poetic genres which Clarke taught him:

. . . you first taught me all the sweets of song:  
The grand, the sweet, the terse, the free, the fine;  
What swell'd with pathos, and what right divine:  
Spenserian vowels that elope with ease,  
And float along like birds o'er summer seas;  
Miltonian storms, and more, Miltonian tenderness;  
Michael in arms, and more, meek Eve's fair slenderness.  
Who read for me the sonnet swelling loudly  
Up to its climax and then dying proudly?  
Who found for me the grandeur of the ode,  
Growing, like Atlas, stronger from its load?  
Who let me taste that more than cordial dram,  
The sharp, the rapier-pointed epigram?  
Shew'd me that epic was of all the king,  
Round, vast, and spanning all like Saturn's ring?

The poetic genres which Clarke taught Keats are the genres of the eighteenth-century revival of Renaissance poetry — the Spenserian epic, which Thomson, Shenstone, Beattie, Mary Tighe, and Leigh Hunt imitated; the Miltonic epic, which influenced the long descriptive and didactic poems of Thomson, Young, Akenside, and Cowper; the ode of Gray and Collins; the sonnet of Edwards, Warton, Char-

lotte Smith, Mary Tighe, Coleridge, and Leigh Hunt; and the epigram of Burns, Cowper, Coleridge, and others. The poems which Keats composed in Edmonton belong to the genres of eighteenth-century poetry. He composed an imitation of Spenser, a poem in Miltonic octosyllabics, a reflective lyric in iambic quatrains, four sonnets, an ode, a didactic poem in heroic stanzas, two social and complimentary poems in anapestic quatrains, and a song in anapestic quatrains.

The fascinating story of Keats's inspiration to compose poetry was first published by Lord Houghton in 1848 on the authority of Charles Brown and Charles Cowden Clarke. In the memoir of Keats which he gave to Lord Houghton, Brown said:

(Though born to be a poet, he was ignorant of his birthright until he had completed his eighteenth year. It was the *Fairie Queene* that awakened his genius. In Spenser's fairy-land he was enchanted, breathed in a new world, and became another being; till enamoured of the stanza, he attempted to imitate it, and succeeded. This account of the sudden development of his poetic powers I first received from his brothers and afterwards from himself. This, his earliest attempt, the *Imitation of Spenser*, is in his first volume of poems, and it is peculiarly interesting to those acquainted with his history.<sup>11</sup>

Clarke introduced Keats to Spenser's poetry, but until he read Lord Houghton's biography of Keats in 1848 he did not know that the first poem Keats composed was the *Imitation of Spenser*. Keats stood too much in awe of Clarke's poetic taste to show his early poems to him. The first poem which Keats gave to Clarke was the sonnet which he wrote on the day Leigh Hunt left prison, February 3, 1815; and Clarke remembered years afterwards the "conscious look and hesitation" with which Keats offered it to him.

Clarke's story of Keats's imaginative reaction to the imagery and melody of Spenser's poetry is vivid and convincing.

It were difficult, at this lapse of time, to note the spark that fired the train of his poetical tendencies; but he must have given unmistakable tokens of his mental bent; otherwise, at that early stage of his career, I never could have read to him the "Epithalamion" of Spenser; and this I remember having done, and in that hallowed old arbour, the scene of many bland and graceful associations -- the substances having passed away. At that time he may have been sixteen years old; and at that period of life he certainly appreciated the general beauty of the composition, and felt the more passionate passages; for his features and exclamations were ecstatic. How often, in after-times, have I heard him quote these lines: —

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<sup>11</sup> Sir Sidney Colvin, *John Keats*, p. 20.

Behold, while she before the altar stands,  
 Hearing the holy priest that to her speaks,  
 And blesses her with his two happy hands,  
 How the red roses flush up to her cheeks!  
 And the pure snow, with goodly vermeil stain,  
 Like crimson dyed in grain,  
 That even the angels, which continually  
 About the sacred altar do remain,  
 Forget their service, and about her fly,  
*Oft peeping in her face, that seems more fair,*  
*The more they on it stare;*  
 But her sad eyes, still fasten'd on the ground,  
 Are govern'd with goodly modesty,  
 That suffers not one look to glance awry,  
 Which may let in a little thought unsound.

That night he took away with him the first volume of the "Faerie Queene," and he went through it, as I formerly told his noble biographer, "as a young horse would through a spring meadow — ramping!" Like a true poet, too — a poet "born, not manufactured," a poet in grain, he especially singled out epithets, for that felicity and power in which Spenser is so eminent. He *hoisted* himself up, and looked burly and dominant, as he said, "What an image that is — 'sea-shouldering whales!'"

The date at which Clarke read Spenser to Keats and the date at which Keats composed his *Imitation of Spenser* have been disputed. Clarke said indefinitely that Keats "may have been sixteen years old" when they read Spenser together; and Lord Houghton, computing the date upon the basis of Clarke's statement, said that Keats read Spenser "in the beginning of 1812." Brown said, apparently on Keats's own authority, that Keats did not read Spenser "until he had completed his eighteenth year" — that is, that Keats read Spenser sometime after October 29, 1813. Keats's short stature caused Clarke to underestimate his age. For instance, Clarke said that Keats was younger than his brother George, although he was one and one-third years older; and Clarke said that Keats left school in his fourteenth year, although he really left school just before he completed his sixteenth year. If we correct Clarke's chronology, which is consistently about two years too early, he would agree with Brown that Keats read Spenser sometime after October 29, 1813. Keats composed his *Imitation of Spenser*, I believe, in the beginning of 1814. In the first place, since he had never before composed a poem it is probable that he read Spenser for a month or two before he ventured to imitate him. Clarke's description of Keats's reaction to Spenser comprises a series of readings, and the two friends met together five or six times a month for their symposia in the old arbor

of the Clarke School. In the second place, the *Imitation of Spenser* was inspired, as we shall see, by the description of the Bower of Bliss in the twelfth canto of the second book of the *Faerie Queene*. In the third place, the *Imitation of Spenser* is too faithful a reproduction of Spenser's art to be an immediate expression of a first reaction.

Keats had read doubtless a great deal of poetry before he read Spenser, but Clarke could not recall the first poems which Keats read. In imitating Spenser, Keats followed a distinct poetic tradition of his age. It is quite probable, therefore, that he had read Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, a creative fusion of the House of Morpheus and the Bower of Bliss in *The Faerie Queene*; and Leigh Hunt's *Palace of Pleasure*, a literal imitation of the Bower of Bliss. It is possible that he had read Shenstone's *Schoolmistress*, Beattie's *Minstrel*, Mary Tighe's *Psyche*, and other imitations of *The Faerie Queene*.

Keats did not imitate Spenser, however, in the usual manner of eighteenth-century imitators of that poet. His *Imitation*, for instance, has neither story nor allegory. It is an expression of the picture that was formed in his mind by reading Spenser's description of the Bower of Bliss. He had been deeply impressed, Clarke said, by the vivid imagery of the Bower of Bliss. The image of the "sea-shouldering whales," at which he "hoisted himself up and looked burly and dominant," occurs in the story of Sir Guyon's voyage to the island on which the Bower of Bliss was situated. He had been impressed also by the melody of Spenser's verse,

Spenserian vowels that elope with ease,  
And float along like birds o'er summer seas. . . .

His method of description is impressionistic rather than expository. He presented, without explanatory transitions, a series of flashing images which suggest to a reader who is familiar with *The Faerie Queene* the full and varied landscape of the Bower of Bliss.

The only version of the *Imitation of Spenser* is that which Keats published in his *Poems* of 1817.

#### IMITATION OF SPENSER.

Now Morning from her orient chamber came,  
And her first footsteps touch'd a verdant hill;  
Crowning its lawny crest with amber flame,  
Silv'ring the untainted gushes of its rill;  
Which, pure from mossy beds, did down distill,  
And after parting beds of simple flowers,  
By many streams a little lake did fill,  
Which round its marge reflected woven bowers,  
And, in its middle space, a sky that never lowers.

There the king-fisher saw his plumage bright  
 Vieing with fish of brilliant dye below;  
 Whose silken fins, and golden scales' light  
 Cast upward, through the waves, a ruby glow:  
 There saw the swan his neck of arched snow,  
 And oar'd himself along with majesty;  
 Sparkled his jetty eyes; his feet did show  
 Beneath the waves like Afric's ebony,  
 And on his back a fay reclined voluptuously.

Ah! could I tell the wonders of an isle  
 That in that fairest lake had placed been,  
 I could e'en Dido of her grief beguile,  
 Or rob from aged Lear his bitter teen:  
 For sure so fair a place was never seen,  
 Of all that ever charm'd romantic eye:  
 It seem'd an emerald in the silver sheen  
 Of the bright waters; or as when on high,  
 Through clouds of fleecy white, laughs the coerulean sky

And all around it dipp'd luxuriously  
 Slopings of verdure through the glossy tide,  
 Which, as it were in gentle amity,  
 Rippled delighted up the flowery side;  
 As if to glean the ruddy tears, it tried,  
 Which fell profusely from the rose-tree stem!  
 Haply it was the workings of its pride,  
 In strife to throw upon the shore a gem  
 Outvieing all the buds in Flora's diadem.

An analysis of the *Imitation of Spenser* into the materials out of which Keats composed it will enable us to study the genesis of his poetic art. In the first stanza, the image of the dawn follows the great but artificial style of English Renaissance poetry, in which natural forces and phenomena are expressed by the mythological symbols of classical poetry. It was composed in emulation of such images of Spenser as the following:

Now when the rosy fingred Morning faire  
 Weary of aged Tithones saffron bed,  
 Had spred her purple robe through deawy aire,  
 And the high hills Titan discovered. . .

[*F. Q.*, I. ii. vii. 1-4]

The phrase "amber flame," I think, was a reminiscence of the sunrise in Milton's *L'Allegro* (vv. 58-61):

. . . on hillocks green  
 Right against the eastern gate  
 Where the great Sun begins his state,  
 Robed in *flames* and *amber* light. . .

The "untainted gushes" of the "rill" that flowed down the "verdant hill" may have been suggested by Milton's *Comus* (vv. 926-927):

From a thousand petty rills,  
That tumble down the snowy hills. . . .

The formation of the "little lake" from the "untainted gushes of its rill,"

Which, pure from mossy beds, did down distill,  
And after parting beds of simple flowers,  
By many streams a little lake did fill,

was suggested by Spenser's description of the "little lake" in the Bower of Bliss:

Infinite streames continually did well  
Out of this fountaine, sweet and faire to see,  
The which into an ample laver fell,  
And shortly grew to so great quantitie,  
That like a litle lake it seemd to bee. . . .

[II. xii. lxii. 1-5]

The verse,

Which round its marge reflected woven bowers,

was suggested by Spenser's description of the "little lake" in the Bower of Bliss:

And all the *margin* round about was sett  
With shady laurel trees . . .

[II. xii. lxiii. 1-2]

And along the shore of the Idle Lake, there swam

A little gondelay, bedecked trim  
With *boughes and arbours woven cunningly*. . . .

[II. vi. ii. 7-8]

The verse,

And, in its middle space, a sky that never lowers,

has a parallel in Spenser,

When so the froward *skye* began to *lowre*. . . .

[III. vi. li. 7]

The phrase "middle space" occurs twice in the second book of *The Faerie Queene*. The word "lower" is used with striking effect by Gray in the first verse of *The Fatal Sisters*:

Now the storm begins to *lower*. . . .

In his second stanza, Keats described a kingfisher and a swan that haunted the little lake. In Spenser's description of the Idle Lake and

the Bower of Bliss, birds, and even more their songs, play an important part among the various allurements of sense. For Keats's description of the kingfisher, E. V. Weller cited a parallel in Mary Tighe's description of Cupid:

The brilliant plumage shines so heavenly bright. . . .

[*Psyche*, II. 23 4]

It is doubtful, however, whether Keats had read Mrs. Tighe's *Psyche* at this time. The image of the swan, as Woodhouse suggested, was taken directly and almost literally from Milton's *Paradise Lost* (VII. 438-440):

. . . the swan with arched neck  
Between her white wings mantling proudly, rows  
Her state with Oarie feet. . . .

The "fay" that "reclined voluptuously" on the back of the swan was suggested to Keats by the wicked fays of the Bower of Bliss who enticed men to sensual indulgence. When Sir Guyon, the Knight of Temperance, passed by the little lake in the Bower of Bliss,

Two naked damzelles he therein espyde,  
Which, therein bathing, seemed to contend  
And wrestle wantonly, ne car'd to hyde  
Their dainty partes from view of any which them eyd.

In the third stanza, Keats changed from objective to subjective description because, it is probable, he knew that he could not reproduce objectively in brief space Spenser's gorgeous picture of the isle of the Bower of Bliss. He suggested the wonders of this isle, therefore, by expressing their emotional effect upon himself. The allusion to Dido came from his laborious translation in writing of the whole of the *Aeneid*, which he had begun in the Clarke School in Enfield and which he had recently completed in Edmonton. The phrase, to "beguile" a person of his "tears," occurs in Shakespeare's *Othello* and in the romantic poetry of the eighteenth century. The "bitter teen" of the "aged Lear" is probably an allusion to Shakespeare's *King Lear*, although it may allude to the story of King Leyr in the second book of *The Faerie Queene*. "Teen," a common archaism in Renaissance poetry, occurs twice in the second book of *The Faerie Queene*. The image of the isle in the lake is the most beautiful one in the poem:

It seem'd an emerald in the silver sheen  
Of the bright waters. . . .

"Sheen," which is always an adjective in Spenser, is used as a noun by Milton and his imitators of the eighteenth century. In *Comus* (vv. 893-895), for instance, the "sliding chariot" or vessel of Sabrina is

Thick set with agate, and the azurn *sheen*  
Of turkis blue, and *emerald* green  
That in the channel strays. . . .

The image,

. . . as when on high  
Through clouds of fleecy white, laughs the coerulean sky,

came to Keats from Milton or from Milton through Thomson. In *Il Penseroso* (v. 72), Milton described the "wandering moon,"

*Stooping through a fleecy cloud.*

Thomson reproduced the image with additions in his *Autumn*:

Now through the passing *cloud* she seems to *stoop*,  
Now up the pure *cerulean* rides sublime . . .

The adjective "coerulean" is common in romantic poetry of the eighteenth century, occurring in Thomson, Joseph Warton, Thomas Warton, Mary Tighe, and Leigh Hunt of the *Juvenilia*.

In the fourth stanza, Keats completed his picture of the wondrous isle of the Bower of Bliss. His metaphor of the "ruddy tears," "which fell profusely from the rose-tree stem," is both intelligible and vivid to us if we recall the *carpe diem* song in *The Faerie Queene*. When Sir Guyon entered the Bower of Bliss he discovered Acrasia, the enchantress, lying upon a "bed of roses,"

The whiles some one did chaunt this lovely lay: —  
Ah! see who so fayre thing doest faine to see,  
In springing flowre the image of thy day;  
Ah! see the virgin rose, how sweetly shee  
Doth first peepe foorth with bashfull modestee,  
That fairer seemes, the lesse ye see her may;  
Lo! see soone after, how more bold and free  
Her bared bosome she doth broad display;  
Lo! see soone after, how she fades and falls away.

Regarding the rose as the symbol of the decay of beauty, Keats could quite properly call her red petals, which had fallen to the ground, her "ruddy tears." Other details in his description — the "sloping of verdure," the "glossy tide," the "workings of its pride," the "rose-tree," and the "buds in Flora's diadem" — were suggested by Spenser's description of the isle of the Bower of Bliss,



whose fayre grassy grownd  
Mantled with greene, and goodly beautifide  
With all the ornaments of Floraes pride. . . .

The device of beginning a sentence with "haply" is common in Milton and his imitators.

In the *Imitation of Spenser*, as this analysis proves, Keats expressed his imaginative reactions to Spenser's Bower of Bliss. With his impressions of the Bower of Bliss he fused reminiscences of Milton's *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Comus*, and the seventh book of *Paradise Lost*. He revealed indeed an unexpected knowledge of Milton's poems. His diction is the common poetic diction of the eighteenth-century imitators of Spenser and Milton. He learned the art of poetic composition, therefore, from the artificial and imitative poetry of the eighteenth-century schools of Spenser and Milton. Like Thomson and Gray, for instance, he drew the substance and style of his poem from the poetry of Spenser and Milton instead of from his own personal experience in Enfield and Edmonton. He was a creative poet, however, and he composed out of his impressions of Spenser's Bower of Bliss as imaginative a poem as he could have composed out of his impressions of a natural landscape.

## 3

All of the poems which Keats composed in Edmonton conform in thought, imagery, genre, metre, and diction to the romantic poetry of the second half of the eighteenth century. None of these juvenile poems has the slightest trace of that naturalism which Wordsworth had launched into the current of English poetry in 1798. The evolution of Keats's poetry in this period, however, passed through two distinct stages. In the first half of his residence in Edmonton, as we have seen, he looked backward to Enfield, visited Clarke four or five times a month, and read and studied under his direction. He read the Renaissance poets, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton and the early romantic poets, such as Thomson and Gray, and at the end of this period composed his *Imitation of Spenser*. In the second half of his residence in Edmonton he looked forward to London, in which his brother George was living, formed a friendship with George Felton Mathew, a young cockney poetaster, and read and imitated more contemporary poets of the eighteenth-century schools of poetry, such as Mary Tighe, Charlotte Smith, Coleridge, Campbell, Tom Moore, Byron, and Leigh Hunt.

The story of the provenience of Keats's juvenile poems gives us a great deal of assistance in studying the social and literary forces which influenced their substance and style. In his first volume of poems (March 1817), he published five juvenile poems — the *Imitation of Spenser* (January or February 1814), the sonnet *Written on the day Mr. Leigh Hunt left Prison* (February 3, 1815), the address *To Hope* (February 1815), and two social trifles in anapestic quatrains, *To Some Ladies* and *On receiving a curious Shell, and a Copy of Verses, from the same Ladies* (late summer of 1815). These poems are neither better nor worse than others which he had composed in this period. He selected them for publication, it is probable, for personal rather than for artistic reasons.

Almost all of Keats's juvenile poems, with the exception of those which he published, were preserved by his friend and admirer, Richard Woodhouse, who made several books of transcripts of his poems. In the Scrap-book, which is now in the Pierpont Morgan Library, Woodhouse pasted transcripts of Keats's poems and autographs and transcripts of poems and letters by Keats's friends. From this book, which he kept as a depository of Keats's juvenile poems, Woodhouse copied several of these poems into his *Commonplace Book* and his *Book of Transcripts*, which are now in the library of the Marquess of Crewe, the son of Lord Houghton, the first biographer of Keats. Woodhouse obtained most of these juvenile poems from his cousin, Mary Frogley, who was a member of the social circle of the Mathews, the cockney circle in which Keats and his brother George moved in 1814 and 1815. From Mary Frogley Woodhouse obtained the following poems which Keats composed in 1814 and 1815 — the sonnet *On Peace* (April 1814), the octosyllabics *Fill for me a brimming Bowl* (August 1814), the *Ode to Apollo* (February 1815), the epigram *Infatuate Britons!* (May 1815), and the anapestic quatrains *Oh! come, my dear Emma* (summer 1815). He obtained also from Mary Frogley the valentine *Hadst thou lived in days of old*, which Keats wrote for his brother George to send to her on February 14, 1816, the sonnet *As from the darkening gloom* (winter or spring 1816), and the sonnet *Oh! how I love, on a fair Summer's eve* (summer 1816).

Mary Frogley obtained some of Keats's poems from George Keats, but most of the juvenile poems from Kirkman, who was a friend of Keats's. Woodhouse placed the following note at the head of a particular set of manuscripts of the juvenile poems in the Scrap-book:

The small pieces marked K.F. (10 in number) were copied for my cousin into a volume of M. S. poetry, by Mr. Kirkman, and said to be by Keats. — They

appear to be so from internal evidence. They must have been all written before the year 18 . Some of them are perhaps among earliest compositions. — They have different degrees of merit. — All are worth preserving; if merely as specimens of his powers at different times, & his improvement. —

On this set of manuscripts, which are numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, and 12, the following poems are transcribed: *Stay, ruby-breasted warbler, stay* (Mss. 1 and 2), *Oh! come, my dear Emma, the rose is full blown* (Mss. 2 and 3), *See! the ship in the bay is riding* (Ms. 3), *Hadst thou lived in days of old* (Mss. 4 and 5), *Fill for me a brimming bowl* (Mss. 6 and 7), the sonnet *On Peace* (Ms. 7), the ode *To Apollo* (Mss. 10, 11, and 12), and the epigram *Infatuate Britons* (Ms. 12). Manuscripts 8 and 9 and the poems which were transcribed upon them are missing.

The note which Woodhouse wrote at the head of Manuscript 1 — that the small pieces marked “F” were transcribed by Kirkman into Mary Frogley’s volume of manuscript poetry — applies to all of these poems except the valentine *Hadst thou lived in days of old*, although none of them is marked with an “F.” In the Book of Transcripts, however, into which Woodhouse transcribed several of these poems from the Scrap-book, the sonnet *On Peace* and the octosyllabics *Fill for me a brimming bowl* are marked with an “F.”

Woodhouse had a scholarly passion for accuracy. He took infinite pains to correct his texts of Keats’s poems and his notes upon them. He collected these poems from Keats himself as well as from Keats’s friends, and he preserved two, three, and four versions of many poems. In most cases he gave the source of his notes, and in all cases he distinguished between facts and surmises. He did not date all of the poems which he transcribed, but in the dates which he gave there is only one serious error which can be proved. He took the obvious precaution of asking Keats about the authenticity of poems which he had obtained from other persons. In the case of the poem *See! the ship in the bay is riding*, which Kirkman transcribed into Mary Frogley’s volume of manuscript poetry, he added this note:

This poem K. said had not been written by him. He did not see it; but I repeated the first 4 lines to him.

He did not discover, however, that another poem in this group, *Stay, ruby-breasted warbler, stay*, was not composed by Keats.

The sonnet *On Peace* has been preserved in two transcripts which Woodhouse made, one of which, as we have seen, is in his Scrap-book and the other in his Book of Transcripts. I quote the text from the Scrap-book, which is the source of the other text.

## ON PEACE

O Peace! and dost thou with thy presence bless  
 The dwellings of this war-surrounded Isle,  
 Soothing with placid brow our late distress,  
 Making the triple kingdom brightly smile?

Joyful I hail thy presence, and I hail  
 The sweet companions that await on thee;  
 Complete my joy — let not my first wish fail,  
 Let the sweet Mountain nymph thy favorite be,  
 With England's happiness proclaim Europa's liberty

Oh Europe, let not sceptred tyrants see  
 That thou must shelter in thy former state;  
 Keep thy chains burst, and boldly say thou art free;  
 Give thy Kings law — leave not uncurbed [the great?]  
 So with the Honors past thou'lt win thy happier fate

In the Book of Transcripts, the fourth word in the last verse is so written that Harry Buxton Forman read it "horrors" and Ernest de Sélincourt "honours." In the Scrap-book the word is clearly "honors." In both transcripts the thirteenth verse is incomplete but the words "the great" have been inserted in pencil.

The date of the composition of the sonnet can be ascertained definitely by an analysis of the political situation which inspired the sentiment of the sonnet. Keats and Clarke, as we have already seen, were disciples in politics of Leigh Hunt, who as editor of *The Examiner* was the leader of the little group of liberals who had survived the conservative reaction in England. Keats's reactions to the political events of 1814 and 1815, therefore, would be the same as those which Hunt expressed in *The Examiner*.

The purpose and character of *The Examiner* have been fairly and justly defined in the *Autobiography* which Hunt published in 1850.

The main objects of the *Examiner* newspaper were to assist in producing Reform in Parliament, liberality of opinion in general (especially freedom from superstition), and a fusion of literary taste into all subjects whatsoever. It began with being of no party; but Reform soon gave it one. It disclaimed all knowledge of statistics; and the rest of its politics were rather a sentiment, and a matter of training, than founded on any particular political reflection. It possessed the benefit, however, of a good deal of general reading. It never wanted examples out of history and biography, or a kind of adornment from the spirit of literature; and it gradually drew to its perusal many intelligent persons of both sexes, who would, perhaps, never have attended to politics under any other circumstances.

Hunt regarded Bonaparte as an egotist who had constructed a tyranny out of the broken fragments of the French Republic; but he

dared to argue in the face of reactionary public opinion that the tyranny of Bonaparte was more salutary than the tyranny of the Bourbons. In *The Examiner* for April 10, 1814 he commented upon the political events that accompanied the capture of Paris on March 31, 1814. He had censured the reactionary policies of the Allies for years; but he praised their conduct in the occupation of Paris. "Paris has been entered by the allies," he said, "it has been preserved from the horrors of slaughter and conflagration, and a Provisional Government has been chosen, which has deposed Bonaparte, has maintained the freedom of conscience, and finally has declared for a free constitution, the choice of which has been guaranteed by the conquerors." This liberal conduct of the allies inspired Hunt with an enthusiastic hope for the future of liberty and peace in Europe. In *The Examiner* for April 17 he said: "The main sensation, on this occasion, is that of delight at finding that the world for so many years has not been bleeding in vain." The more intelligent nations of Europe, he continued, seem inclined to build for their future security the foundations of rational liberties. In the same number of *The Examiner*, he printed an *Ode for the Spring of 1814*, in which he gave poetic expression to these hopes:

The freeman feels his hope restored,  
When most his heart was shrinking.

At the same time he wrote a masque, *The Descent of Liberty*, in which the Goddess of Liberty, accompanied by four spirits, the spirits of Prussia, Austria, Russia, and Britain, descends on earth and overthrows the evil enchanter, who is Bonaparte. In *The Examiner* for May 8, however, his hopes for liberty and peace in Europe have begun to wane. In *The Examiner* for May 15 he expressed indignation that Denmark at the command of the allies had ceded Norway to Sweden contrary to the will of the Norwegian people. In *The Examiner* for May 22 his hopes for liberty and peace have been utterly destroyed by the despotic conduct of the allies. "Peace can only permanently dwell with Justice," he said. "If the Definitive Treaty thus surrenders up Italy, and Saxony, and Poland, to dependence and foreign sway, the seeds of future and speedy wars will be scattered all over Europe."

In the spring of 1815 Bonaparte escaped from his confinement on the Island of Elba and returned to France. In *The Examiner* for March 19 Hunt said that if the allies had kept the liberal promises which they made after the capture of Paris in 1814, the French people would never again have received Bonaparte. In the war be-

tween Bonaparte and the allies in 1815 Hunt sympathized with Bonaparte, for he believed that the French people had the right to choose their own ruler. After the defeat of Bonaparte by the allies at the Battle of Waterloo on June 18, 1815 Hunt had learned by experience not to cherish hope of a descent of liberty and peace. In *The Examiner* for July 2 he censured the intention of the allies to reestablish the Bourbon dynasty in France as an intention to maintain by force the principle of the divine right of kings. He summed up the course of his political sentiments in 1814 and 1815 as follows:

When the Sovereigns of Europe united against Bonaparte after the campaign in Russia, there was no attempt, at least no apparent one, to revive this principle [the principle of the divine right of kings]; and we were on their side, and did everything in our power, in spite of all misgivings, to encourage them, because he was decidedly in the wrong, and they had not hitherto shown themselves apostates from the right. The treatment of Norway, Saxony, Italy, etc. bitterly undeceived us; but still we should not have been even comparatively with Bonaparte in this struggle, had he not, in our opinion, with whatever inclinations of his own, been thrown on the side of an ultimately good and free principle, against the pertinacious pretensions and revived corruptions of what is called legitimate royalty.

Since Keats's political opinions were inspired by Leigh Hunt's *Examiner*, which Clarke lent him, his reactions to the political events of 1814 and 1815 would correspond exactly with Hunt's. His sonnet *On Peace*, therefore, could not have been composed earlier than March 31, 1814 and not later than May 8, 1814; for that is the only period in which Hunt and the English liberals had hopes of liberty and peace in Europe. The five last verses of the sonnet seem to be an exhortation to the members of the French Senate who were drafting the new French constitution presented to the Senate for ratification on April 6, 1814. Hunt, who hoped the liberal articles of this constitution would curb despotic tendencies in Louis XVIII, printed the constitution in *The Examiner* with approving and encouraging comment.

Leigh Hunt had a more evident influence upon the substance than upon the form of the poems which Keats composed in Edmonton. Hunt, like Keats, learned the art of poetic composition from eighteenth-century poets; but being older than Keats he was influenced by the school of Pope as well as by the schools of Spenser and Milton. In the *Juvenilia*, which he published in 1801, he wrote pastorals in the style of Pope, didactic poems in closed heroic couplets, translations from the classics, an allegory in Spenserian stanzas in the style of Spenser and Thomson, octosyllabics in the style of Milton, Thomson, Akenside, Dyer, etc., descriptive and didactic poems in blank verse in the style of Milton, Thomson, Akenside, and Cowper, elegies

in the style of Gray, odes in the style of Gray and Collins, and sonnets with the Shakespearean rhyme scheme in the style of Charlotte Smith. Since Keats had an early and constant admiration for Hunt, the *Juvenilia* was doubtless one of the first books of verse that he read. The influence of Hunt's juvenile poems upon the style of the poems which Keats composed in Edmonton, however, is merged indissolubly with the influence of the eighteenth-century poets whom both Hunt and Keats read and imitated.

The style of the sonnet *On Peace* can be explained with reference to the style of the sonnets which were composed in the second half of the eighteenth century. Keats deified and apostrophied Peace in the manner which Thomas Warton the Elder, Gray, and Collins derived from Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. Deified, or personified, abstractions such as Mercy, Pity, Fear, Liberty, Peace, Hope, Adversity, and Solitude are peculiarly characteristic of the eighteenth-century ode; but they are also common in the sonnet and other types of poetry of that period. These "sky-born forms," as Collins called them, took the place of classical deities in the poetry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For his abstractions Keats was indebted to Milton as well as to the imitators of Milton in the eighteenth century. The sweet companions that await on Peace, and especially the sweet mountain nymph, who is Liberty, came directly from *L'Allegro*; and the device of "hailing" these abstractions was suggested by *Il Penseroso*. The diction of the sonnet is the common poetic diction of romantic poetry of the eighteenth century.

The form of the sonnet *On Peace* is remarkably irregular. Woodhouse divided the sonnet into a quatrain and two quintets (abab-cdcd-dedee); but we could divide it into three quatrains and a couplet (abab-cdcd-ded-ee), in which case we should regard it as an irregular Shakespearean sonnet. The irregularity of the form, especially of the rhyme scheme, is not due, as de Sélincourt inferred, to the inexperience or ineptitude of the young poet. If Keats could compose regular Spenserian stanzas in January or February 1814, he could, we may be sure, compose regular Shakespearean sonnets in April 1814. The irregular form of the sonnet *On Peace* reveals, as a matter of fact, that it was an imitation of a definite type of the eighteenth-century sonnet.

The evolution of the eighteenth-century sonnet is a complex problem. Professor Havens,<sup>12</sup> who examined over 2500 sonnets which were composed between 1740 and 1800, discovered that 636 were

<sup>12</sup> Raymond D. Havens, *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry*.

strictly Petrarchan in form, 451 were Shakespearean, 17 were Spenserian, and 1398 were irregular. In every decade from 1760 to 1800 irregular sonnets, most of which were illegitimate variations of the Petrarchan sonnet, were more numerous than the three regular types taken together. In the last decade of the century Shakespearean sonnets were more numerous than Petrarchan

Thomas Edwards, William Mason, and Thomas Warton, the first influential sonneteers of the eighteenth century, revived the Miltonic sonnet with its wide range of subject-matter, its address to persons, its plain, severe style, its blank verse metrical structure, and its Petrarchan rhyme scheme. The Miltonic sentiment of the sonnet was soon modified, however, by eighteenth-century sentiments. Thomas Warton introduced romantic and pensive musings in natural scenes and in places of historic associations such as crumbling mediaeval castles and abbeys. Other sonneteers introduced the pervasive sensibility or sentimentality of the age. The sonneteers who employed the English or Shakespearean form were only slightly influenced either in style or in sentiment by the great Elizabethan masters of that form. For the most part, sonneteers of the eighteenth century fall into two groups both in form and in sentiment. One group, composed of John Bamfylde, Thomas Russell, Sir Edgerton Brydges, Anna Seward, and William Cowper, employed the Petrarchan or Miltonic rhyme scheme and a plain, severe style. The other group of sonneteers, such as Charlotte Smith, Richard Polwhele, W. L. Bowles, Mary Robinson, Helen Maria Williams, Mary Tighe, and Coleridge, employed a greater variety of rhyme schemes, most of which were either Shakespearean or irregular, and sentimental and melancholic sentiments.

Charlotte Smith, whose *Elegiac Sonnets* went through eleven editions from 1784 to 1800, is representative of this second group of sonneteers. Most of her quatorzains have the Shakespearean rhyme scheme (abab-cdcd-efef-gg), some are rhymed in closed quatrains (abba-cddc-efef-gg), a few have the Petrarchan rhyme scheme (abba-abba-cdc-dcd), and others defy classification. In her preface Mrs. Smith stated her conception of the form of the sonnet: "The little poems which are here called Sonnets, have, I believe, no very just claim to that title: but they consist of fourteen lines, and appear to me no improper vehicle for a single Sentiment. I am told, and I read it as the opinion of very good judges, that the legitimate Sonnet is ill calculated for our language."

Anna Seward, who modeled her sonnets on Milton's, scorned the loose quatorzains of Charlotte Smith. In the preface to her *Original*



*Sonnets* (second edition, 1799), she quoted with approval a definition of the sonnet from the Supplement to the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1786: "Little Elegies, consisting of four stanzas and a couplet, are no more Sonnets than they are Epic Poems. The Sonnet is of a particular and arbitrary construction; it partakes of the nature of Blank Verse, by the lines running into each other at proper intervals. Each line of the first eight, rhymes four times, and the order in which these rhymes should fall is decisive. For the ensuing six there is more license; they may, or may not, at pleasure, close with a couplet." In a sonnet *To Mr. Henry Cary* Miss Seward defined and illustrated the Petrarchan sonnet. In the sestet, she said:

Our greater Milton hath, in many a lay  
Woven on this arduous model, clearly shewn  
That English verse may happily display  
Those strict energetic measures which alone  
Deserve the name of Sonnet, and convey  
A spirit, force, and grandeur, all their own!

Coleridge, who modeled his sonnets on those of Charlotte Smith and William Lisle Bowles, scorned Miss Seward's defence of the legitimate sonnet. In the preface to the second edition of his poems (*Poems by S. T. Coleridge, To which are added Poems by Charles Lamb and Charles Lloyd, 1797*), he called Miss Seward's sonnet *To Mr. Henry Cary* an "ingenious but unintentional burlesque" on the legitimate sonnet. "I have never yet been able," he said, "to discover sense, nature, or poetic fancy in Petrarch's poems; they appear to me all one cold glitter of heavy conceits and metaphysical abstractions. However, Petrarch, although not the inventor of the Sonnet, was the first who made it popular; and his countrymen have taken his poems as the model. Charlotte Smith and Bowles are they who first made the Sonnet popular among the present English: I am justified therefore by analogy in deducing its laws from their compositions." The sonnet, he said, is "confined to fourteen lines, because as some particular number is necessary, and that particular number must be a small one, it may as well be fourteen as any other number." "Respecting the metre of the Sonnet," he continued, "the Writer should consult his own convenience. — Rhymes, many or few, or no rhymes at all — whatever the chastity of his ear may prefer, whatever the rapid expression of his feelings will permit; — all these things are left at his own disposal." Coleridge composed some of the most irregular sonnets of the last decade of the eighteenth century; his sonnet *To the River Otter*, for instance, is rhymed abba-acdc-dce-ece. The two most common rhyme schemes of his sonnets are the open quatrains

(abab-cdcd-efef-gg), which Charlotte Smith preferred, and the closed quatrains (abba-cddc-efef-gg), in which Bowles wrote most of his sonnets.

Mary Tighe and Leigh Hunt, who belong to this group of sonneteers, were influenced by Charlotte Smith in subject, sentiment, imagery, diction, and rhyme scheme. Of Mary Tighe's twenty-one sonnets, eight are written in closed quatrains; two have the strict Petrarchan rhyme scheme; five have legitimate variations of the Petrarchan rhyme scheme; five are irregular; and one has the open quatrains of the Shakespearean rhyme scheme. The six sonnets which Hunt published in his *Juvenilia* have the Shakespearean rhyme scheme.

Keats's sonnet *On Peace*, as we have seen, has an irregular rhyme scheme, which resembles the Shakespearean scheme more than any other regular one. It belongs, therefore, to the school of Charlotte Smith, Coleridge, and Leigh Hunt. The patriotic subject, the love of liberty, led Keats to employ a diction that is less sentimental than the diction of most of the sonnets of Mrs. Smith, Bowles, Mrs. Tighe, Coleridge, and Hunt. The same love of liberty, however, led Coleridge to employ the same elevated diction in his *Sonnets to Eminent Characters* — Erskine, Burke, Priestly, La Fayette, Kosciusko, Pitt, Sherridan, and Stanhope. On the whole the sonnet *On Peace* is closer in style and substance to Coleridge's *Sonnets to Eminent Characters* than to other sonnets which Keats may have read. At the time of his death Keats possessed copies of Coleridge's *Poems* of 1797 and Leigh Hunt's *Juvenilia*, and in all probability he had possessed them from a very early period of his life. Coleridge's *Sonnets to Eminent Characters* are not in the edition of 1797, but appear in the editions of 1796 and 1803.

The social and literary setting of the poems which Keats composed in Edmonton in 1814 and in 1815 can be reconstructed from the poems themselves and from Charles Cowden Clarke's *Recollections*, George Keats's letters to Charles Wentworth Dilke, George Felton Mathew's *Recollections*, and Richard Woodhouse's *Scrap-book and Book of Transcripts*. Woodhouse's *Scrap-book* and Mathew's review of Keats's *Poems* of 1817, both of which have been discovered by scholars within the last five years, not only give additional facts concerning this obscure period of Keats's poetry but also shed light upon facts from the other sources, which had been known for a long time.

George Keats was withdrawn from the Clarke School in the mid-summer of 1811 and placed in the counting-room of his guardian, Richard Abbey, a wholesale coffee and tea merchant, 4 Pancras

Lane, London. Keats visited his brother in London, met his brother's friends, and took part in their social and literary activities. By the latter half of 1814, Keats and his brother George had been admitted into a social group which consisted of Ann and Caroline Mathew, daughters of a prosperous tradesman; George Felton Mathew, their cousin; Archer, a suitor of Caroline Mathew's; Kirkman; and Mary Frogley. William Haslam, one of the earliest of Keats's friends in London, was also a member of this group, it is probable, although his name is not mentioned by Woodhouse.

George Felton Mathew was the first poet whom Keats met, with whom he established friendship, and with whom he composed poems in friendly emulation. Thirty years after this period, Mathew wrote his recollections of Keats for Lord Houghton.

Keats and I though about the same age, and both inclined to literature, were in many respects as different as two individuals could be. He enjoyed good health — a fine flow of animal spirits — was fond of company — could amuse himself admirably with the frivolities of life — and had great confidence in himself. I, on the other hand was languid and melancholy — fond of repose — thoughtful beyond my years — and diffident to the last degree. But I always delighted in administering to the happiness of others: and being one of a large family, it pleased me much to see him and his brother George enjoy themselves so much at our little domestic concerts and dances. . . . He was of the sceptical and republican school. An advocate for the innovations which were making progress in his time. A faultfinder with everything established. I, on the contrary, hated controversy and dispute — dreaded discord and disorder — loved the institutions of my country. . . . But I respected Keats's opinions, because they were sincere — refrained from subjects on which we differed, and only asked him to concede with me the imperfection of human knowledge, and the fallibility of human judgment: while he, on his part, would often express regret on finding that he had given pain or annoyance by opposing with ridicule or asperity the opinions of others. . . . His eye admired more the external decorations than felt the deep emotions of the Muse. He delighted in leading you through the mazes of elaborate description, but was less conscious of the sublime and the pathetic. He used to spend many evenings in reading to me, but I never observed the tears in his eyes nor the broken voice which are indicative of extreme sensibility. These indeed were not the parts of poetry which he took pleasure in pointing out.<sup>13</sup>

In the 1840's, when Mathew wrote these recollections, he was, Sir Sidney Colvin observed,<sup>13</sup> "a supernumerary official of the Poor Law Board, struggling meekly under the combined strain of a precarious income, a family of twelve children, and a turn for the interpretation of prophecy." The defeated, middle-aged Mathew, however, was no more sentimental, moralistic, and self-righteous than the youthful

<sup>13</sup> Sir Sidney Colvin, *John Keats*, pp. 24-25.

Mathew. The review of Keats's *Poems* which Mathew published in the *European Magazine* for May 1817 reveals the same personal qualities as the recollections which he wrote for Lord Houghton thirty years afterwards.

Mathew did not give the dates of his friendship with Keats; and Keats's biographers, disliking the tone of Mathew's recollections, have been tempted to decide that this friendship was very brief. Sir Sidney Colvin<sup>14</sup> and Miss Lowell<sup>15</sup> decided that it began in the summer of 1815, shortly before Keats wrote the poem in anapestics to the Misses Mathew, and that it ended in the late autumn of 1815, shortly after Keats wrote his poetic epistle to Mathew. John Middleton Murry,<sup>16</sup> going farther, regarded Keats's friendship with Mathew as a mere interlude in his friendship with Clarke, beginning with his arrival in London on October 1, 1815 and ending with the arrival of Clarke in London a month or two later.

The dates and comments in Woodhouse's Scrap-book, however, show that the friendship between Keats and Mathew began as early as the autumn of 1814, if not earlier, that it attained its greatest degree of intimacy in November 1815, and that it was still flourishing in February 1816. The epistle which Mathew wrote to Keats in October 1815, and which he published in the *European Magazine* for October 1816, proves that their friendship had not come to an end in October 1816, although it is probable that it was declining. And the review of Keats's *Poems* which Mathew published in the *European Magazine* for May 1817 proves that their friendship came to an end when and because Keats became a member of Leigh Hunt's coterie at the end of October 1816.

A survey of Mathew's personality and poetry reveals the personal, social, and poetic forces which affected Keats in 1814 and in 1815. Mathew's sketch of his own personality is perfectly supported by his poems and reviews. He was a sentimental, romantic, grave, and didactic young man, conservative in politics and orthodox in religion. He disapproved of those revolutionary political principles which Keats had learned from Leigh Hunt through Charles Cowden Clarke. He was so sentimental by temperament and so deeply imbued with the sensibility of the eighteenth century that he regarded Keats as insensible. "The eye of Keats," he said, "was more critical than tender, and so was his mind: he admired more the external decorations than felt the deep emotions of the Muse. He delighted in

<sup>14</sup> Sir Sidney Colvin, *John Keats*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>15</sup> Amy Lowell, Vol. I, pp. 55-56, 91, 243.

<sup>16</sup> J. M. Murry, *Studies in Keats*.

leading you through the mazes of elaborate description, but was less conscious of the sublime and the pathetic. He used to spend many evenings in reading to me, but I never observed the tears in his eyes nor the broken voice which are indicative of extreme sensibility." George Keats and Charles Cowden Clarke, who were not sentimental, were impressed, on the contrary, by Keats's deep sensibility. Clarke remembered, as we have seen, that on one occasion, when Keats was reading *Cymbeline* aloud, his eyes filled with tears and his voice faltered as he read Shakespeare's description of Posthumus' departure from Imogen. Keats differed from Mathew in having a strong instead of a weak sensibility. He was influenced by Mathew's sensibility, however, and by the sensibility of the poetry which he read with Mathew. His association with Mathew marks the beginning of the sentimental phase of his poetry.

Mathew and his friends read and imitated romantic and sentimental poets, such as Macpherson, Charlotte Smith, Mary Tighe, Tom Moore, and Byron. They wrote social and complimentary poems to one another and preserved these poems in commonplace books. They composed amorous and occasional sonnets, anacreontics in heptasyllabics, complimentary and occasional poems in octosyllabics and in anapestic quatrains, and songs in anapestic quatrains.

Woodhouse entitled the second half of his Scrap-book, which contains his annotated transcripts of Keats's juvenile poems, "Poems — etc. — by, or relating to, John Keats." "All that are not by Keats," he said, "have the names of the authors added. —" He dated this section "Nov. 1818" — that is, he began collecting these poems in that month. He obtained these poems from his cousin, Mary Frogley, who was a member of George Felton Mathew's social and literary group in 1814, 1815, and 1816. He himself was not personally acquainted with Mathew. He transcribed three of Mathew's poems, introducing them as follows:

One of Keats's Epistles (p. 53) is addressed to Geo: Felton Matthew, who is very flatteringly hailed as a brother poet. — The verses (p. 29 of Keats's Poems) ~~appear~~ I am informed were sent to the Misses Mathew, cousins of the above Gentleman, then at Hastings, & that Mr. M. was then with them — The next copy of verses (p. 32) — "On receiving a shell & verses from the same ladies" appear to be addressed to Mr. Matthew. — I am not aware that Mr. M. has ever published any of his Compositions: — I have obtained the follow[ing] copy of verses, which were written by him, & clearly refer to the Copy sent to him by Keats, & published p. 32. — How far Mr. M. is entitled to the poetical character assigned to him by Keats, it would be scarcely fair to judge from this one specimen. —

Woodhouse transcribed the original version of Mathew's epistle *To a Poetical Friend*, who, as he suggested, was Keats. He was unaware that Mathew had published a revised version of this epistle in the *European Magazine* for October 1816. I shall quote this epistle when I consider the poems which Keats composed in October and November 1815.

Woodhouse transcribed also a poem which Mathew addressed to Mary Frogley in 1814.

The following lines, also written by Mr. Mathew, were sent to the young lady, to whom Keats's lines (p. 36) were addressed, with a Copy of the *Poems of Ossian*. —

The poem on p. 36 of Keats's *Poems* of 1817 is the heptasyllabics *Hadst thou liv'd in days of old*, which, Woodhouse said, Keats composed for his brother George to send as a valentine to Mary Frogley on February 14, 1816. Mathew wrote his poem to Mary Frogley in the metre and style of the juvenile poems of Tom Moore and Byron. Keats employed the same metre and style, as we shall see, in the poem which he wrote to the Misses Mathew in the late summer of 1815. Mathew's poem represents the sensibility or sentimentality and the romanticism of his coterie.

Oh —, thou bright beam of joy,  
 I am come to disturb thy repose;  
 But may griefs of its own ne'er annoy  
 The soul that with sympathy glows.  
 When away from the Song and the dance,  
 When gaiety fades in thine eyes,  
 Cast over these volumes a glance,  
 'Tis a treasure thy spirit will prize.  
 For altho' deeply dimpled with mirth,  
 I know that thy soul's from above;  
 And not mean, and not common's the worth  
 Of thy heart that can pity & love.  
 The tales of the time that are past,  
 The poems of Ossian of Kings,  
 Are like music that's borne on the blast,  
 That proceeds from Aeolian strings.  
 When thou reatest the tales that he tells,  
 Thy sadness will stand in a tear,  
 But wherever tranquility dwells  
 There's pleasure in sadness that's dear.  
 Can I paint the bright eye of the fair,  
 Who sheds tears at the fall of the brave?  
 It is like a dim meteor in air,  
 Like the moon on a blue trembling wave.

'Tis the only true solace of man,  
That relieved him in every distress;  
Let renown do whatever it can  
'Tis Beauty alone that can bless. —

G. F. M. 1814.

Woodhouse transcribed a third and undated poem which Mathew addressed *To a Young Lady* whom he accused of playing "a false and fickle part" because she had not kept her promise to visit his home one cold and wintry evening. Since Woodhouse made a note in shorthand that he obtained the poem "from Mary Frogley," it is possible that Mathew had addressed the poem to her. Mathew wrote the poem in octosyllabics, imitating, it would seem, the octosyllabics of several of Byron's juvenile poems. Two other poems in Woodhouse's Scrap-book, *See the ship in the bay is riding* and *To Woman*. — (*from the Greek*), were composed probably either by Mathew or by some member of his coterie and copied into Mary Frogley's commonplace book. Keats told Woodhouse that he did not compose the first of these poems; and the second, which is neither signed nor dated, has no quality which stamps it as Keats's.

Little is known about Ann and Caroline Mathew. In the late summer of 1815, while they were at the seashore at Hastings, they sent Keats a copy of Tom Moore's *Golden Chain* and a dome-shaped shell and received an answer in anapestic quatrains. In 1819 Kirkman told Keats that Archer, who had almost lived at the Mathews' for two years, had declined to marry Caroline, pretending that he was unable to support a wife as he wished. "What is worst," Keats exclaimed indignantly, "is Caroline is 27 years old. It is an abominable matter." In her middle age, when Lord Houghton asked her to relate her recollections of Keats, she replied with an expression of "evangelical penitence" for the frivolities of her youth. She could remember very little about Keats's personality and nothing at all about his poetry.

I cannot go farther [she said] than to say I always thought he had a very beautiful countenance and was warm and enthusiastic in his character. He wrote a great deal of poetry at our house but I do not recollect whether I ever had any of it, I certainly have none now; Ann had many pieces of his.<sup>17</sup>

When Keats participated in the poetical activities of Mathew's social group in London in the latter part of 1814, he composed social and complimentary poems in imitation of the style of popular sentimental and romantic poets. *Fill for me a brimming Bowl*, which

<sup>17</sup> Sir Sidney Colvin, *John Keats*, p. 24.

Woodhouse noted was composed in August 1814, was the first poem in which Keats expressed an incident of his social experience in London. Woodhouse preserved four transcripts of this poem, one of which is in his Book of Transcripts and three of which are in his Scrap-book. He obtained the version upon which three of these transcripts are based from Mary Frogley, who in turn had obtained it from Kirkman. He discovered afterwards an earlier version, by which he corrected some of the errors in the three transcripts of the later one. I quote the earlier version from the Scrap-book. It is more authentic than the later version, for it is transcribed probably in the autograph of George Keats. It preserves the frank diction of the sixth verse which was revised in the later version (by Kirkman, possibly out of a delicate regard for the maidenly sensibilities of Mary Frogley); and it has a motto from Terence's *Eunuch* which is lacking in the later version.

What wondrous beauty! From this mo[ment I ban]ish  
from my mind all women. Terence's *Eunuch*. Act 2, S. 4.

Fill for me a brimming Bowl,  
And let me in it drown my Soul  
But put therein some drug design'd,  
To banish Woman from my Mind  
For I want not the Stream inspiring,  
That heats the Sense with lewd desiring;  
But, I want as deep a draught  
As e'er from Lethe's waves was quaff  
From my despairing Breast to charm  
The Image of the fairest form  
That e'er my rev'ling Eyes beheld  
That e'er my wand'ring Fancy spell'd!  
'Tis vain — away I cannot chace,  
The melting softness of that face —  
The beaminess of those bright Eyes —  
That breast Earth's only Paradise!  
My sight will never more be blest  
For all I see has lost its zest;  
Nor with delight can I explore  
The classic Page — the Muses lore  
Had she but known how beat my heart  
And with one Smile reliev'd its smart,  
I should have felt a sweet relief  
I should have felt "the Joy of Grief"!  
Yet as a Tuscan 'mid the Snow  
Of Lapland thinks on sweet Arno;  
So for ever shall she be  
The Halo of my memory.

Aug. 1814.



Sir Sidney Colvin stated on the authority of annotations in Woodhouse's Book of Transcripts that *Fill for me a brimming Bowl* was inspired by the beauty of a lady whom Keats saw for a few minutes in Vauxhall and that the sonnets, *When I have fears that I may cease to be*, which was composed on January 31, 1818, and *Time's sea hath been five years at its slow ebb*, which was composed on February 4, 1818, were inspired by remembrance of the same lady. Miss Lowell expressed doubt of the authenticity of Woodhouse's story. She examined Woodhouse's Scrap-book but did not examine his Book of Transcripts because, she said, it had been studied exhaustively by Sir Sidney Colvin and Harry Buxton Forman. She misunderstood, therefore, and discounted the annotations in the Scrap-book. If we consider all of Woodhouse's notes on this poem, we must accept his story.

On page 222 of his Book of Transcripts, Woodhouse quoted *Fill for me a brimming Bowl*, and observed in a note:

At p. 28 will be found a sonnet alluding to the same lady — Keats mentioned the circumstances of obtaining a casual sight of her at Vauxhall, in answer to my inquiry — Feb<sup>y</sup>. 1819. See also p. 64.

The sonnet on page 28 is *Time's sea* and the sonnet on page 64 is *When I have fears*. In a note to *Time's sea* he observed:

See p. 222 — where lines are inserted alluding to the same lady to whom this is addressed. See also p. 64.

On page 74 of his Scrap-book he quoted *Fill for me a brimming Bowl* and said in a note:

See p. 28 — where a sonnet is addressed (I believe) to the same lady who is here alluded to. Feby. 1819 K. this day said they both related to the same person. And see p. 64.

In this note he referred not to poems on pages 28 and 64 in the Scrap-book but to poems on pages 28 and 64 in the Book of Transcripts, which are, as we have seen, the sonnets *Time's sea* and *When I have fears*. In his Commonplace Book, in a note on the sonnet *Time's sea*, he said: "See the lines p. 3 probably written to the same person." The first eleven pages of the Commonplace Book are missing, but the lines on page 3 were doubtless *Fill for me a brimming Bowl*.

The incident which inspired this poem reminded Keats of a similar incident in Terence's *Eunuch*, Act II, Scene iii. Phaedria, a young Athenian boy, saw a girl of surpassing beauty in a street in Athens and fell in love with her on sight; but, being detained by a garrulous

old friend of his father's, he was unable to follow her and discover her identity. When he met Parmenio, the clever servant, he exclaimed:

O faciem pulchram! deleo omnis dehinc ex animo mulieres. . . .

It is probable that Keats read Terence's *Eunuch* in one of the many English translations<sup>18</sup> which had been published before 1814. The precise phraseology of the motto which he quoted from *The Eunuch* —

What wondrous beauty! From this mo[ment I ban]ish  
from my mind all women —

does not occur in any of the seven translations which I have examined. It has affinities, however, with the phraseology of Gordon's translation (edition of 1752):

How exquisitely beautiful she is — From this moment I blot out of my mind the remembrance of all other women . . .

and with the phraseology of Patrick's translation (edition of 1810):

O charming creature! From this moment I banish all other women from my heart.

It is possible that Keats quoted freely from memory from one of these two translations. His mistake in assigning his quotation to scene iv instead of to scene iii of the second act indicates that he quoted from memory.

The incident in *Fill for me a brimming Bowl* is common both in poetry and in the experience of young men. When Milton was nineteen years old he wrote a poem in Latin, *Elegia Septima*, in which he expressed his glowing impressions of the beauty of a girl whom he saw for a few moments in some place of public resort in London. Byron, too, expressed a similar experience in his poem *To a Beautiful Quaker*:

Sweet girl! though only once we met,  
That meeting I shall ne'er forget;  
And though we ne'er may meet again,  
Remembrance will thy form retain.  
I would not say, "I love," but still  
My senses struggle with my will:  
In vain, to drive thee from my breast,

<sup>18</sup> The following translations of Terence's *Comedies* were lent to me by my colleague, Professor T. W. Baldwin: R. Bernard's, 4th ed., 1614; Dr. Webb's, 1629; Hoole's, 1670; Laurence Echard's, 5th ed., 1718; Gordon's, 1752; Colman's, 2nd ed., 1768; and Patrick's, 1810.

My thoughts are more and more repress;  
 In vain I check the rising sighs,  
 Another to the last replies:  
 Perhaps this is not love, but yet  
 Our meeting I can ne'er forget, etc

The story, emotion, diction, and metre of *Fill for me a brimming Bowl* are so similar to those of *To a Beautiful Quaker* that I believe that Keats was influenced by Byron's poem. Through George Felton Mathew, Keats acquired a sentimental admiration for Byron, to whom he addressed a sonnet in December 1814.

*Fill for me a brimming Bowl* is written in verses of eight syllables, the stresses falling on the even syllables, varied by verses of seven syllables, the stresses falling on the odd syllables. To the romantic poets of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries this measure was a Miltonic measure, the measure of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. In experimenting with Milton's octosyllabics, Keats was following a precedent of a long line of his predecessors and contemporaries. The vogue of Miltonic octosyllabics in the eighteenth century was established by Gray, Collins, Mason, and the Wartons about 1740. As the vogue spread, the measure was steeped in eighteenth-century sensibility and the vigor of its great model was dissipated. We may take the amorous correspondence of Della Crusca (Robert Merry) and Anna Matilda as an example of the sentimental nonsense which was written in octosyllabics. George Felton Mathew's octosyllabics have no further source than Byron's, but Keats's octosyllabics echo Milton's faintly but distinctly.

The diction of *Fill for me a brimming Bowl* is the common poetic diction of late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century amorous poems in octosyllabics. It is identical with the diction of Byron's *To a Beautiful Quaker*. Certain phrases are peculiarly characteristic of eighteenth-century diction. "Muse's lore" occurs, for instance, in Thomson's *Castle of Indolence* (I. xl. 7) and in Mary Tighe's *Psyche* (I. 56. 2). "Classic page" occurs in Mason's ode *On Expecting to Return to Cambridge* and in Byron's *Childish Recollections*, and analogical phrases, such as "Greek and Roman page," "philosophic page," "sacred page," are common. A vogue of alluding to "Lapland," which was begun by Thomson, was widespread. Allusions to "Tuscan" and "Arno," as well as to "Lapland," were characteristic of the poetry of the Della Cruscan school. The first verse, "Fill for me a brimming Bowl," is similar to a verse in Gray's *Bard*, "Fill high the sparkling bowl." Keats used one word, I believe, in a Miltonic sense:

The image of the fairest form  
 That e'er my rev'ling Eyes beheld  
 That e'er my wand'ring Fancy *spell'd* . . .

In this context "spell'd," which is parallel in construction to "beheld," has "fancy" as a subject and "image" as an object. It cannot, therefore, have the meaning of "cast a spell upon." It probably has the meaning which Milton gave it in *Il Penseroso*:

Where I may sit and rightly *spell*  
 Of every star that Heaven doth shew,  
 And every hearb that sips the dew. . . .

The reflective lyric *On Death* has survived in the Scrap-book of George Keats, who said that it was composed in 1814. It was discovered and published by Harry Buxton Forman in 1883.

#### ON DEATH

##### I.

Can death be sleep, when life is but a dream,  
 And scenes of bliss pass as a phantom by?  
 The transient pleasures as a vision seem,  
 And yet we think the greatest pain's to die.

##### 2

How strange it is that man on earth should roam,  
 And lead a life of woe, but not forsake  
 His rugged path; nor dare he view alone  
 His future doom which is but to awake.

This poem follows the style and thought of the didactic poetry of the second half of the eighteenth century, in which we find meditative analyses of liberty, hope, peace, fear, death, etc. I have not found a particular source of the poem. The theologic principle, that life on earth is merely a dream in the real life in Heaven, is a Christian Platonic principle which is common in English poetry in every period. Keats composed the poem before the death of his grandmother in December 1814, it is probable; for in the two weeks between the death of his grandmother, to whom he was tenderly attached, and the end of the year he would not have speculated about death in the impersonal manner of this poem.

The sonnet *To Lord Byron* was transcribed by Woodhouse in his Book of Transcripts and dated "Decr. 1814."

#### TO LORD BYRON

Byron! how sweetly sad thy melody!  
 Attuning still the soul to tenderness,  
 As if soft Pity, with unusual stress,

Had touch'd her plaintive lute, and thou, being by,  
 Hadst caught the tones, nor suffer'd them to die.  
 O'ershadowing sorrow doth not make thee less  
 Delightful: thou thy griefs dost dress  
 With a bright halo, shining beamily,  
 As when a cloud the golden moon doth veil,  
 Its sides are ting'd with a resplendent glow,  
 Through the dark robe oft amber rays prevail,  
 And like fair veins in sable marble flow;  
 Still warble, dying swan! still tell the tale,  
 The enchanting tale, the tale of pleasing woe.

In 1814 Byron played a romantic and glamorous role in English life. By means of a series of oriental romances, *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, and *Lara*, he maintained the spectacular reputation which he had won in 1812 with *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (Cantos I and II). In the poems which he had published at this time, there was little trace of the romantic cynicism of his later poems. To Keats and to George Felton Mathew he was the poet of romantic melancholy, who clothed the dark sorrows which overshadowed him in enchanting tales of woe whose sweetly sad melody attuned the soul to tenderness. Keats and Mathew were particularly attracted by the juvenile poems, *Hours of Idleness*, in which Byron had expressed his youthful disillusionment and melancholy.

In the sonnet *To Lord Byron*, sentimental melancholy, a phase of eighteenth-century sensibility, appeared in fully developed form in Keats's poetry for the first time. This sentimental melancholy was particularly characteristic of the plaintive sonnets of William Hayley, Charlotte Smith, Helen Maria Williams, Mary Robinson, Mary Tighe, and William Lisle Bowles. Charlotte Smith, the most influential of these sonneteers, was a gentle plaintive melodist who softly warbled her tale of tender woe. "Some very melancholy moments have been beguiled by expressing in verse the sensations those moments brought," she said in the preface to her *Elegiac Sonnets*. "I can hope for readers only among the few who, to sensibility of heart, join simplicity of taste." Coleridge, who modeled his sonnets upon those of Charlotte Smith and William Lisle Bowles, defined the sonnet as "a small poem in which some lonely feeling is developed." A "querulous egotism," he argued, is an inherent characteristic of sonnets and monodies. Leigh Hunt, whose sonnets were influenced by Charlotte Smith's, wrote a sonnet *To Sensibility*, describing "Sensibility" as the "Sister of Love," "the soft pow'r," to whom "the gently-throbbing breast, And am'rous glance and love-lorn lay belong."

Sister of Love, thro' yon deserted grove  
 That warblest sweet they lorn romantic tale,  
 Or by the mould'ring abbey lov'st to rove,  
 And ask the pity of the sighing gale.

The sonnet *To Lord Byron* is more similar in diction and in mood to the sonnets of Charlotte Smith and Mary Tighe than to any other sonnets that I have read. With the sonnet *To Lord Byron* we might compare the first quatrain of Charlotte Smith's sonnet *To a Night-ingale*:

Poor melancholy bird — that all night long  
 Tell'st to the Moon thy tale of tender woe;  
 From what sad cause can such sweet sorrow flow,  
 And whence this mournful melody of song?

In the sonnet *To Lord Byron* Keats did not allude explicitly to the grief which he felt at the death of his grandmother, Alice Jennings, who was buried on December 19, 1814 at St. Stephen's in Colman Street, Edmonton. The grief to which he alluded, the context shows, was the grief which overshadowed Byron. I am inclined to believe that he composed this sonnet in the early part of December before the death of his grandmother. A little more than a year later, as we shall see, he composed a sonnet in her memory.

The sonnet *To Chatterton* is transcribed in Woodhouse's Scrap-book in the autograph, it seems, of Charles Cowden Clarke. There is a transcript of a later version in Woodhouse's Book of Transcripts. Both transcripts are signed and dated "J.K. 1815." Keats composed the sonnet in the early part of 1815 (in January, I believe); for it is closely connected in style and in thought with the sonnet *To Lord Byron*, which he composed in December 1814, and the sonnet *Written on the day that Mr. Leigh Hunt left Prison*, February 3, 1815. I quote the earlier version from the Scrap-book.

#### SONNET

O Chatterton! how very sad thy fate!  
 Dear Child of Sorrow! Son of Misery!  
 How soon the film of death obscur'd that Eye,  
 Whence Genius wildly flash'd, and high debate!  
 How soon that voice, majestic and elate,  
 Melted in dying murmurs! O how nigh  
 Was night to thy fair Morning! Thou didst die  
 A half-blown flower, which cold blasts amate.\*  
 But this is past — Thou art among the Stars  
 Of highest Heaven; to the rolling spheres

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\* affright — Spenser

Thou sweetly singest — nought thy hymning mars  
Above the ingrate world and human fears.  
On Earth the good Man base detraction bars  
From thy fair Name and waters it with Tears!

J. K. 1815.

The romanticists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries conceived of the poet as a man of such exquisite sensibility that he was doomed to neglect, defeat, and death in a world of dull and obtuse men. The tragic fate of Chatterton, "the marvellous boy," who killed himself because of neglect and poverty, made a deep impression upon the generation of poets who followed him. The apotheosis of Chatterton as the "poet accursed" appeared in fully developed form in Coleridge's *Monody on the Death of Chatterton*, which was composed in 1790. In all probability Keats had read Coleridge's *Monody*; for it had been published in 1794 in Lancelot Sharpe's *Poems by Thomas Rowley and Others* and in 1797 in the second edition of Coleridge's *Poems*, of which Keats possessed a copy. All of the ideas and almost all of the words of Keats's sonnet have close parallels in Coleridge's monody.

In his *Poems* of 1817, Keats published the sonnet *Written on the day that Mr. Leigh Hunt left Prison*, February 3, 1815.

As editor of *The Examiner* Hunt fought fearlessly and persistently in the cause of liberty and justice. He advocated abolition of the slave trade, emancipation of Catholics, Parliamentary reform, reform of criminal and civil laws, reform of military administration and discipline, equalization of taxes, reduction of the public debt, etc. He attacked constitutional and administrative abuses without respect to parties or persons. In 1808 *The Examiner* was prosecuted for an article on a pamphlet by a Major Hogan, who accused the Duke of York, the commander-in-chief of the army, of favoritism and corruption. In 1809 *The Examiner* was prosecuted for saying: "Of all monarchs since the Revolution, the successor of George the Third will have the finest opportunity of becoming nobly popular." In 1811 *The Examiner* was prosecuted for reprinting parts of an article by John Scott in the *Stamford News* on military flogging. These three prosecutions were defeated; and Hunt became bolder in his censure of political abuses. In 1812 he delivered himself into the hands of his enemies by a libel on the Prince Regent. George, Prince of Wales, had been affiliated with the Whigs, who advocated various liberal measures, one of which was Catholic emancipation; but when he was appointed Regent he retained the Tory ministry and maintained Tory policies. At the annual dinner of Irishmen in London on St.

Patrick's Day, March 17, 1812, a toast to the Prince Regent was greeted with hisses. *The Morning Post*, in defence of the Prince Regent, praised him as the "Glory of the People," the "Protector of the arts," the "Maecenas of the age," the "Breather of eloquence," the "Conqueror of hearts," the "Exciter of desire," and the "Adonis in loveliness." In *The Examiner* for March 22, Hunt, angered by this "disgusting flattery," "showed truth to flatter'd state" by calling the Prince Regent "a corpulent man of fifty, . . . a violator of his word, a libertine, over head and ears in disgrace, a despiser of domestic ties, the companion of gamblers and demireps, a man who had just closed half a century without one claim on the gratitude of his country, or the respect of posterity." As a consequence of this ridicule and vituperation of the Prince Regent, Leigh Hunt, the editor, and his brother, John Hunt, the publisher, of *The Examiner* were convicted of libel and condemned severally to pay a fine of five hundred pounds and to serve two years in prison.

Leigh Hunt's imprisonment in Horsemonger Lane Gaol, from February 3, 1813 to February 3, 1815, was singularly free from severity. Together with his wife and children, who were permitted to reside with him, he occupied an apartment which he converted into a bower for a poet by decorating the ceiling with clouds and a sky, covering the walls with rose-trellised papering, screening the windows with Venetian blinds, and furnishing the apartment with bookshelves, plaster casts of poets, and a small pianoforte. The "surprise" of visitors on passing through the avenues of the jail into this poetic bower was "dramatic." Charles Lamb declared there was no other such room except in a fairy tale. During his imprisonment Hunt continued to write political editorials for *The Examiner*. He also composed several poems — an *Ode for the Spring of 1814*, *The Descent of Liberty*, *The Story of Rimini*, and *Sonnets to Hampstead*. English liberals, such as Brougham, Bentham, Byron, Hazlitt, and Lamb, visited him in prison and encouraged him. His friends and disciples called him *Libertas*, the incarnation of the Spirit of Liberty. Moore praised him for

The Pride, that suffers without vaunt or plea  
And the fresh Spirit, that can warble free,  
Through prison-bars, its hymn to Liberty!

From his school days Keats had followed the political career of Leigh Hunt through successive issues of *The Examiner* which Charles Cowden Clarke lent him. His sonnet *On Peace*, as we have seen, was inspired by the editorials which Hunt wrote from prison on the cap-



ture of Paris and the defeat of Bonaparte. His knowledge of Hunt, however, was not derived exclusively from *The Examiner*. Clarke, who had met Hunt shortly before his libel on the Prince Regent, visited the patriot in prison and sent him "a weekly basket of fresh flowers, fruit, and vegetables." From Clarke's account of Hunt's appearance, actions, and conversation, Keats knew Hunt almost as well as if they had been personal friends.

One day, shortly after Hunt had been released from prison, Clarke walked to London to congratulate him, and on his way he met Keats, who, turning, accompanied him back part of the way.

At the last field-gate, when taking leave, [Clarke said], he gave me the sonnet entitled, "Written on the day that Mr. Leigh Hunt left Prison." This I feel to be the first proof I had received of his having committed himself in verse; and how clearly do I recall the conscious look and hesitation with which he offered it!

*Written on the day that Mr. Leigh Hunt left Prison*

What though, for showing truth to flatter'd state,  
Kind Hunt was shut in prison, yet has he,  
In his immortal spirit, been as free  
As the sky-searching lark, and as elate.  
Minion of grandeur! think you he did wait?  
Think you he nought but prison walls did see,  
Till, so unwilling, thou unturn'dst the key?  
Ah, no! far happier, nobler was his fate!  
In Spenser's halls he strayed, and bowers fair,  
Culling enchanted flowers; and he flew  
With daring Milton through the fields of air:  
To regions of his own his genius true  
Took happy flights. Who shall his fame impair  
When thou art dead, and all thy wretched crew?

Keats alluded subtly and appropriately to those circumstances of Hunt's imprisonment which I have recounted. He knew Hunt's poetry, but he was unaware, it is evident, of those natural elements which Hunt had introduced into his poetry as early as 1810 and 1811. He still regarded Hunt as a disciple of the eighteenth-century schools of Spenser and Milton. The diction of the sonnet — in such phrases, for instance, as "what though," "flatter'd state," "immortal spirit," "sky-searching lark," "elate," "fields of air," "his fame impair," and "wretched crew" — represents the style of eighteenth-century adaptations of Miltonic diction. These phrases remind one particularly of the phrases of Gray and Collins.

The form as well as the substance of the sonnets *To Lord Byron*, *To Chatterton*, and *To Leigh Hunt* sheds light upon the evolution of Keats's poetry. In the eight or nine months that had elapsed since he

had composed the irregular Shakespearean sonnet *On Peace*, Keats had changed his conception of the form of the sonnet. These three sonnets have the strict Petrarchan rhyme scheme (abba-abba-cdcdcd), and one of them, the sonnet *To Chatterton*, has a division in form and in thought between the octave and sestet.

The victory for the Petrarchan or Miltonic form of the sonnet had been won in English poetry before Keats composed his irregular Shakespearean sonnet *On Peace*. In the last decade of the eighteenth century, the production of Shakespearean sonnets exceeded that of Petrarchan; but by 1814 the Petrarchan form became the universal one. In 1807 Wordsworth published his *Sonnets to Liberty* in the Petrarchan form; in 1813 Leigh Hunt, whose juvenile sonnets were Shakespearean, began a series of *Sonnets to Hampstead* in it; and at the end of 1813 Byron composed two Petrarchan sonnets. Capel Lofft, a minor but prolific sonneteer, who was closely associated with sonneteers of the period, is an accurate weathercock of currents in the style of the sonnet. In 1814 Capel Lofft published his *Laura*, a collection of sonnets of all ages, in which he maintained the superiority of the Petrarchan form. In preferring the Petrarchan form of the sonnet, minor sonneteers, such as Capel Lofft, seem to have been influenced by Anna Seward and other eighteenth-century sonneteers rather than by Wordsworth. In refutation of Coleridge's censure of the Petrarchan sonnet, Capel Lofft explained the structure of the sonnet as a musical composition. As the Pindaric ode has three musical divisions, the strophe, the antistrophe, and the epode, so the sonnet, "with analogy to music," has "two movements," each of which is divided into "two strains." The structure of the sonnet is "not an arbitrary and a casual, but a refin'd and harmonious system of composition: a genus of rhythmical Arrangement at once determinate and perfectly unique." The number of lines, the number of rhymes, and the arrangement of the rhymes are governed by the nature of the sonnet.

In adopting the Petrarchan form of the sonnet, Keats followed the fashion of the period. I cannot show, however, that he took the sonnets of a particular poet, such as Milton, Wordsworth, or Hunt, as his definite models. Most of Milton's sonnets are fairly legitimate Petrarchan sonnets, and seven of them have the strict sestet rhyme scheme (cdcdcd). Keats was influenced, however, only very slightly by the diction and imagery of Milton's sonnets, although he was deeply influenced by Milton's other poems. Most of the sonnets which Wordsworth composed before 1815 are strict Petrarchan sonnets; but in all of the poems which Keats composed before the fall of

1815 there is not a single reminiscence of Wordsworth's diction, imagery, and style. Only two of Hunt's *Sonnets to Hampstead* have the strict Petrarchan sestet rhyme scheme (cdcdcd), most of them having the sestet rhyme scheme cdecde. Keats may have been influenced by the strict Petrarchan rhyme schemes of the sonnets of these poets, however, without being influenced by other elements in their sonnets. In any case, his adoption of the strict Petrarchan form of the sonnet followed the poetic tendency of the period.

In his *Poems* of 1817 Keats published an apostrophe *To Hope* which he dated February 1815. He wrote this poem in the style of the didactic poetry of eighteenth-century poets. Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination*, Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope*, Gray's *Hymn to Adversity*, and Collins' *Ode to Liberty*, *Ode to Peace*, etc., are examples of this didactic poetry, which is written in various measures and in various genres. Romantic poets of the eighteenth century, as disciples of Spenser and Milton, accepted imagination and passion as cardinal elements of poetry; but instead of writing imaginatively, they analyzed imagination and passion abstractly and coldly. They found didacticism as well as imagination in Spenser and Milton, and, being poets of the eighteenth century, they seized upon the didactic qualities of their Renaissance masters. Their diction is a fusion of the diverse dictions of their Renaissance masters and their neo-classical contemporaries. They employed personified abstractions, resounding epithets, periphrases, and stock phrases. This didactic poetry of the eighteenth century influenced the juvenile poems of Coleridge, Wordsworth, Byron, Leigh Hunt, and Keats. Wordsworth, as late as 1805, wrote a poem in the style of this didactic poetry. He confessed that his *Ode to Duty* was written "on the model of Gray's Ode to Adversity," which, he added, was "copied from Horace's Ode to Fortune." He did not employ, however, the artificial diction of eighteenth-century poetry, against which he had protested vigorously in 1800.

In the apostrophe *To Hope* Keats presented a series of situations in which he would feel despondent and invoked Hope to rescue him from them. He introduced personified abstractions, such as Despondency, Cheerfulness, Disappointment, Despair, Liberty, and Hope; he employed eighteenth-century stock phrases, such as "relentless fair"; and he wrote the poem in stanzas of six iambic pentameter verses, rhyming ababcc.

The apostrophe *To Hope* was suggested by Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope*. Campbell was seven years younger than Wordsworth, but, like Tom Moore, he never outgrew the style and thought of eight-

eenth-century poetry. He was influenced both by the school of Pope and the school of Spenser. He wrote *The Pleasures of Hope* (1799) in closed heroic couplets and *Gertrude of Wyoming* (1809) in Spenserian stanzas. Keats was attracted, it is probable, by Campbell's enthusiastic love of liberty. Thomson, Beattie, Collins, Campbell, and Leigh Hunt — to name only those poets who influenced Keats — cultivated a native English tradition of liberty that extended back to Milton. They celebrated the same heroes — King Alfred, Wallace, Bruce, Milton, Vane, Hampden, Algernon Sidney, Lord John Russell, William Tell, and Kosciusko. In the sixth and seventh stanzas of his poem, Keats invoked Hope to preserve liberty in England. In these stanzas he did not employ Campbell's phraseology, but in the poems which he composed in the fall of 1816, especially in *Sleep and Poetry*, there are definite reminiscences of Campbell's eulogy of the patriots of old. In his last stanza, Keats compared Hope to a star:

And as, in sparkling majesty, a star  
Gilds the bright summit of some gloomy cloud,  
Brightening the half veil'd face of heaven afar:  
So, when dark thoughts my boding spirit shroud,  
Sweet Hope, celestial influence round me shed,  
Waving thy silver pinions o'er my head

This simile was very probably suggested by a simile in *The Pleasures of Hope* (I, 195-200):

Bright as the pillar rose at Heaven's command,  
When Israel marched along the desert land,  
Blazed through the night on lonely wilds afar,  
And told the path, — a never-setting star;  
So heavenly Genius, in thy course divine,  
Hope is thy star, her light is ever thine.

There is the same simile, as E. V. Weller pointed out,<sup>19</sup> in Mary Tighe's *Psyche* (II. 54, 9):

Hope like the morning star once more shall reappear.

The two last verses of each stanza of *To Hope* constitute a refrain which is artfully varied from stanza to stanza. In each occurrence of the refrain, Keats invoked Hope to protect him from some kind of misfortune. This refrain, which is the imaginative part of the poem, gives a picture of Hope, who, like Collins' "sky-born forms," Pity, Mercy, etc., is a celestial deity who sheds favors upon mortals. Keats's image of Hope was suggested by Campbell's image of Hope and the image of the Dove in Mary Tighe's *Psyche*. The "silver

<sup>19</sup> E. V. Weller, *Keats and Mary Tighe*.

pinions" of Hope, like the "silver dove" of the sonnet *To my Grand-mother* and the "pinions of silver" of the poem *To Some Ladies*, is a reminiscence of Mary Tighe's Dove. The refrain of the first stanza,

Sweet Hope, ethereal balm upon me shed,  
And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head,

is very similar to two verses in *The Pleasures of Hope* (I, 23-24),

With thee, sweet Hope! resides the heavenly light  
That pours remotest rapture on the sight. . . .

The refrain of the seventh stanza,

But let me see thee stoop from heaven on wings  
That fill the skies with silver glitterings!

is similar to two other verses of *The Pleasures of Hope* (I, 53-54),

Angel of life! thy *glittering wings* explore  
Earth's loneliest bounds and ocean's wildest shore . . .

Keats recalled also phrases that he had read in Spenser and in Shakespeare. The "woven boughs" of the second stanza, like the "woven bowers" of the *Imitation of Spenser*, is a reminiscence of Spenser's "boughes and arbours woven cunningly." "To sigh out sonnets to the midnight air" in the fifth stanza was suggested by the Renaissance custom of lovers of writing doleful sonnets to capricious mistresses. It may be a reminiscence of the poems which Orlando wrote to Rosalind, for it reminds one of two verses in *As You Like It* (II, iv, 26-27),

Though in thy youth thou was as true a lover  
As ever sighed upon a midnight pillow. . . .

The apostrophe *To Hope* is conventional and artificial in style, but it reflects undoubtedly Keats's mood in this period. After the death of his grandmother in the middle of December 1814, her home in Edmonton, the only home he could remember, was broken up and his sister was removed to the home of her guardian in Walthamstow. As a consequence of these events he became lonely and despondent in Edmonton, and throughout 1815 he turned with a yearning heart to London, where his brother George was living.

The *Ode to Apollo* was preserved in two transcripts which Woodhouse made, one of which is in his Scrap-book and the other in his Book of Transcripts. On both transcripts Woodhouse dated the ode "Feb<sup>y</sup>. 1815."

The *Ode to Apollo* is written in the sonorous rhetoric of eighteenth-century poetry. In the eighteenth century it was held that poetry,

like music, should inspire the various passions by means of appropriate sounds. The function of the ode in particular was the sublime expression of passion by means of bold and resounding but smooth diction. Dryden, who established the musical character of the ode, said: "To describe [passions] naturally and to move them artfully is one of the greatest commendations which can be given to a poet . . . The chief secret is the choice of words; and, by this choice, I do not here mean elegance of expression, but propriety of sound, to be varied according to the nature of the subject." In *Alexander's Feast*, Dryden celebrated the power of music to inspire men with whatever passions it pleases. While Alexander was sitting at a royal feast, surrounded by his valiant peers, Timotheus struck his lyre, sounded the strains of deity, triumph, pity, love, and revenge, and inspired Alexander with these passions successively. Gray, who modeled his odes upon those of Dryden, said that *Alexander's Feast* was the only ode of the "sublime kind" in English poetry. In *The Progress of Poesy* Gray described the "quiet majestic progress" of poetry "enriching every subject (otherwise dry and barren) with pomp of diction and luxuriant harmony of numbers; and its more rapid and irresistible course, when swollen and hurried away by the conflict of tumultuous passions." Gray's two odes, *The Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard*, are the most extravagant examples of the eighteenth-century ode. "In all of Gray's odes," Dr. Johnson protested, "there is a kind of cumbrous splendour which we wish away."

Keats's *Ode to Apollo*, like Dryden's *Alexander's Feast* and Gray's *Progress of Poesy*, is written in accordance with the eighteenth-century conception of the musical character of the ode. Keats described Apollo, the God of Bards, sitting in his "western halls of gold," surrounded by his laurelled peers, who seize their "adamantine lyres" and strike chords whose tones characterize their poetry.

In thy western halls of gold  
 When thou sittest in thy state,  
 Bards, that erst sublimely told  
 Heroic deeds, and sang of fate,  
 With fervour seize their adamantine lyres,  
 Whose chords are solid rays, and twinkle radiant fires.

Like Dryden, Gray, Collins, and other creators of the ode, Keats believed that its function was the sublime representation of passion by means of the music of words. In his fifth stanza he expressed the common eighteenth-century conception of Shakespeare as the master of the passions.

Thou biddest Shakespeare wave his hand,  
 And quickly forward spring  
 The Passions — a terrific band —  
 And each vibrates the string  
 That with its tyrant temper best accords,  
 While from their Master's lips pour forth the inspiring words.

Keats derived the theme and the stanza form of his *Ode to Apollo* from Vansittart's ode, *The Pleasure of Poetry*, which had been printed in the third volume of Dodsley's *Collection of Poems*. Addressing the Muses, Vansittart said:

With you Elysium's happy bow'rs,  
 The mansions of the glorious dead,  
 I visit oft, and cull the flow'rs  
 That rise spontaneous to your tread;  
 Such active virtue warms that pregnant earth,  
 And heav'n with kindlier hand assists each genial birth.  
 Lo' yonder negligently laid  
 Fast by the stream's impurpled side,  
 Where through the thick-entangled shade,  
 The radiant waves of nectar glide,  
*Each sacred poet strikes his tuneful lyre,*  
*And wakes the ravish'd heart, and bids the soul aspire.*

Vansittart and Keats introduced their bards in the same manner. Introducing Horace, Vansittart said:

Now Horace' hand the string inspir'd,  
 My soul, impatient as he sung,  
 The Muse unconquerable fir'd,  
 And heavenly accents seiz'd my tongue;  
 Then lock'd in admiration sweet I bow'd,  
 Confess'd his potent art, nor could forbear aloud.

And Keats, introducing Homer, said:

Here Homer with his nervous arms  
 Strikes the twanging harp of war,  
 And even the western splendour warms,  
 While trumpets sound afar:  
 But, what creates the most intense surprise,  
 His soul looks out through renovated eyes.

The diction of the *Ode to Apollo* is the peculiarly sonorous diction of the eighteenth-century ode. Dryden, who had an ingenious faculty for inventing resounding phrases, had established the diction of the ode, and Gray, ransacking Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, had increased the store of resounding phrases. Their contemporaries and successors did little more than "ring round the same unvaried chimes." In the *Ode to Apollo* Keats employed such artificial and

sonorous phrases as "heroic deeds," "sublimely told," "adamantine lyres," "radiant fires," "western splendour," "renovated eyes," "melodious swells," "majestic tone," "enraptur'd dwells," "laurell'd peers," "lofty strain," "tuneful thunders," "ravish'd heavens," "terrific band," "tremblingly expire," and "ardent numbers" — phrases which were designed to "charm the ear" and "melt the soul."

These phrases are of such common occurrence in eighteenth-century poetry that their definite sources cannot be established. For instance, Keats described the music of Spenser's poetry as follows:

A silver trumpet Spenser blows,  
And, as its martial notes to silence flee,  
From a virgin chorus flows  
A hymn in praise of spotless Chastity.  
'T is still! Wild-warblings from the Aeolian lyre  
Enchantment softly breathe, and tremblingly expire.

In Gray's *Progress of Poesy* "Aeolian lyre" and "trembling" occur together:

Awake, Aeolian lyre, awake  
And give to rapture all thy trembling strings. . . .

In Gray's *Bard* "warblings" and "expire" occur:

And distant warblings lessen on my ear  
That lost in long futurity expire . . .

In Thomson's *Castle of Indolence* (I. xl. i.) the "Harp of Eolus" is associated with "wild-warbling" and with "Hymn." In a description of the Harp of Eolus Thomson said:

And now a graver sacred strain they stole  
As when seraphic hands a hymn impart:  
Wild-warbling Nature all, above the reach of Art!

The universal "warbling" of eighteenth-century poetry was derived from Milton's *L'Allegro*:

Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,  
Warble his native woodnotes wild.

The other phrases in the ode might be traced in this way through eighteenth-century poetry.

The epigram *Infatuate Britons!* was preserved by Woodhouse in two transcripts, both of which are in his Scrap-book. He made one of the transcripts in the group of manuscripts, at the head of which he noted that Kirkman had copied ten of Keats's juvenile poems into Mary Frogley's volume of manuscript poetry. This transcript is entitled:



— LINES —

Written on 29 May. — the anniversary of Charles's  
Restoration. — On hearing the Bells ringing. —

The other transcript, which is subscribed in shorthand "from Mary Frogley," is entitled:

Written on 29 May, the anniversary of the Restoration of Charles the 2<sup>d</sup>.

The texts of the two transcripts differ slightly in punctuation and in capitalization but not in phraseology. I quote the text of the second:

Infatuate Britons! will you still proclaim  
His memory, your direst, foulest shame  
Nor patriots revere?  
Ah! when I hear each traitorous lying Bell,  
'T is gallant Sydney's, Russell's, Vane's sad knell  
That pains my wounded ear.

J K.

Keats may have composed this "sharp and rapier pointed epigram" either on May 29, 1814 or on May 29, 1815. He was as ardent a lover of liberty in the one year as in the other. We might regard the epigram as a companion-poem in spirit and in style to the sonnet *On Peace*, which he composed in April 1814; but I am inclined to think that he composed the epigram in 1815 because of the experiments which he made in that year in various poetic genres such as the sonnet, the ode, and the didactic apostrophe. His admiration for the English patriots, Sir Henry Vane, Algernon Sidney, and Lord William Russell, who were executed during the reign of Charles II, was inspired doubtless by Bishop Burnet's *History of My Own Time*, which he used to read during his meals at the Clarke School.

In his *Poems* of 1817 Keats published a poem *To Some Ladies* and a companion-poem *On receiving a curious Shell, and a Copy of Verses, from the same Ladies*. Harry Buxton Forman examined a manuscript of the first poem, which was addressed "To the Misses M," and a transcript of the second poem, which was written in the autograph of George Keats and was subscribed, "Written on receiving a copy of Tom Moore's 'Golden Chain,' and a most beautiful Dome shaped shell from a lady." Woodhouse alluded to these two poems in his Scrap-book in a note on George Felton Mathew. In this note, which I have already quoted, he said that he was informed (by Miss Frogley, I presume) that the first poem was sent to Ann and Caroline Mathew, who were at the seashore at Hastings, and that the second poem appeared to be addressed to George Felton Mathew, who was with his cousins at Hastings. In the poem *To Some Ladies* Keats

described the scene in which Ann and Caroline Mathew found the dome-shaped shell which they sent to him.

'T is morn, and the flowers with dew are yet drooping,  
 I see you are treading the verge of the sea:  
 And now! ah, I see it — you just now are stooping  
 To pick up the keep-sake intended for me  
 If a cherub, on pinions of silver descending,  
 Had brought me a gem from the fret-work of heaven;  
 And smiles, with his star-cheering voice sweetly blending,  
 The blessings of Tighe had melodiously given,  
 It had not created a warmer emotion  
 Than the present, fair nymphs, I was blest with from you,  
 Than the shell, from the bright golden sands of the ocean  
 Which the emerald waves at your feet gladly threw.

Keats composed these two poems, all critics agree, in the late summer of 1815. He composed them while or immediately after Ann and Caroline Mathew were at the seashore — that is, in the summer or in the late summer. The intimacy with the Mathews which the poems reveal indicates that he did not compose them as early as the summer of 1814, and the diction and metre, which are eighteenth-century, prove that he composed them before the fall of 1815, for in October 1815 he adopted the natural style of Leigh Hunt and Wordsworth.

Keats employed in these poems the anapestic quatrains of Tom Moore and alluded to Mary Tighe because these poets were read, admired, and imitated in the coterie of the Mathews. Mary Tighe was a plaintive Irish poetess, whose poems drip with the sensibility of the eighteenth century. In her life, as well as in her poems, she was a dying swan, who softly warbled her songs of tender woe, as she sank slowly beneath the ravages of consumption. In 1805 she published her *Psyche*, a long sentimental allegory in Spenserian stanzas. In 1811, a year after her death, William Tighe, her brother-in-law, published an edition of *Psyche, with other Poems*. Her lyrical poems are written in various measures — blank verse, heroic couplets, octosyllabic couplets, the sonnet, and quatrains of various kinds.

The external evidence that Keats read the poetry of Mary Tighe consists in the allusion to the "blessings of Tighe" in the poem *To Some Ladies* and in an allusion to Mary Tighe in a letter which he wrote to George and Georgiana Keats in December 1818. In the letter he said:

The more we know the more inadequacy we discover in the world to satisfy us — this is an old observation; but I have made up my Mind never to take any thing for granted — but even to examine the truth of the commonest proverbs. This however is true — M<sup>rs</sup> Tighe and Beattie once delighted me — now I see

through them and can find nothing in them or weakness, and yet how many they still delight! Perhaps a superior being may look upon Shakespeare in the same light — is it possible? No —

Some critics, misled by these two allusions, the second of which is a casual illustration of a general statement, have stressed unduly the influence of Mary Tighe upon Keats. One critic compared the diction of Keats with that of Mary Tighe, and assigned to the latter's influence every phrase and almost every word which the two poets employed in common. The poetic style of the eighteenth-century school of sensibility was so common and conventional, however, that it is uncritical to attribute to the influence of Mary Tighe those words and sentiments which were the common property of a number of poets such as William Hayley, Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson, Helen Maria Williams, and Robert Merry. The same words and sentiments occur also in the juvenile poems of Coleridge, Tom Moore, Byron, and Leigh Hunt. Mary Tighe, Leigh Hunt, and other poets of the school of sensibility influenced the poems which Keats composed in 1815 and in 1816; but in 1817, as we shall see, Keats freed himself, in large measure, from eighteenth-century sensibility.

The poem *On receiving a curious Shell, and a Copy of Verses, from the same Ladies* represents the extravagant eighteenth-century romanticism of the coterie of the Mathews. Keats addressed George Felton Mathew as the courteous knight, Sir Eric, whose youth was brightened with many glories. In a series of rhetorical questions, he asked the valiant Sir Eric whether he had a gem from the caves of Golconda, whether he had a goblet inscribed with the story of Armida the fair and Rinaldo the bold, and whether he wore the shield of the famed Britomartis. He alluded in these questions to Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (in Fairfax's translation) and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, the two great metrical romances which he had read with Charles Cowden Clarke. He told Mathew, also, that he too had his blisses: Tom Moore's tale of *The Wreath and the Chain* and the dome-shaped shell, the canopy under which King Oberon languished when Titania left him to anguish and sorrow. The allusion to Oberon and Titania may be derived, as Sir Sidney Colvin suggested, from Wieland's *Oberon* (in Sotheby's translation) instead of from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

In this same period, the late summer of 1815, Keats composed the song *O come dearest Emma!* for Ann and Caroline Mathew, who desired fresh words to sing to some tune. In his Scrap-book Woodhouse pasted a manuscript on one side of which this song is transcribed and on the other side of which the *Sonnet to Solitude*, which

Keats composed in October 1815. These transcripts, which are apparently in George Keats's autograph, preserve the earliest versions of these two poems. I quote this (hitherto unprinted) transcript of this song:

## SONG.

## I

O come dearest Emma! The Rose is full bl[own]  
And the Riches of Flora are lavishly [strew]n;  
The air is all softness and chrystal the streams,  
And the west is resplendently clothed in Beams.

## II

We will hasten, My Fair, to the opening glades,  
The quaintly carv'd Seats, and the freshening shades;  
Where the fairies are chaunting their evening Hymns;  
Hid in the last Sun-beam the Sylph lightly swims

## III

And when thou art weary, I'll find thee a bed,  
Of mosses, and flowers, to pillow thy head;  
There beauteous Emma, I'll sit at thy feet,  
While my story of Love I enraptur'd repeat

## IIII

So fondly I'll breathe, and so softly I'll sigh,  
Thou wilt think, that some amorous Zephyr is nigh;  
I will  
Ah! no — as I breath *it*, I press thy fair knee,  
And then, thou wilt know that the sigh comes from me.

## IIIII

Then why lovely girl should we loose all these blisses?  
That mortal's a fool who such happiness misses;  
So smile acquiescence, and give me thy hand,  
With love-looking eyes, and with voice sweetly bland.

Woodhouse made three transcripts of a later version of this song, two of which are in his Scrap-book and one in his Book of Transcripts. In his notes he gave the person from whom he obtained the song, the persons for whom it was composed, and the date of its composition. In the Book of Transcripts the song is entitled *To Emma*, and in parenthesis marks after the title there is a brief shorthand inscription which I have not been able to decipher.<sup>20</sup> On the page opposite the transcript of the song, there is the following note:

<sup>20</sup> H. W. Garrod has recently deciphered this shorthand description as "Mathews" and suggested that, besides Ann and Caroline Mathew, there was an Emma Mathew. *The Times Literary Supplement* for September 5, 1935, p. 552.

This Song was written off in a few minutes at the request of some ladies who wished for words to sing to this tune — (The Misses Mathew [in shorthand]).

One of the transcripts of this song in the Scrap-book is in that series of transcripts which Woodhouse made of the poems which Kirkman had copied into Mary Frogley's volume of manuscript poetry. The other transcript in the Scrap-book is subscribed in shorthand "From Mary Frogley." A note to this transcript — which has been misplaced opposite a sonnet on the preceding page — is almost identical with the note in the Book of Transcripts:

This song was written at the request of some young ladies who were tired of singing the words printed with the air, & desired fresh words to the same tune, ab<sup>t</sup>. 1815/6 —

The song was published by Harry Buxton Forman in 1883 from a transcript in George Keats's Scrap-book. This third version of the song possesses considerable biographical interest. It is entitled "Stanzas to Miss Wylie," and in the text "Georgiana" is substituted for "dearest Emma" of the first version and "my dear Emma" of the second version. When George Keats began to pay suit to Georgiana Augusta Wylie in the summer of 1816, it is evident, he made use of the song which Keats had composed for Ann and Caroline Mathew in the late summer of 1815.

The diction of the first version of the song — with its "opening glades," "freshening shades," "quaintly carv'd seats," "fondly breathe," "softly sigh," "smile acquiescence," "enraptur'd repeat," "Sylph," and "My Fair" — is the eighteenth-century diction of all of the poems which Keats composed in the coterie of the Mathews. The diction of the later versions is somewhat less distinctively eighteenth-century. The diction and the metre prove beyond doubt that Keats composed the song in 1815 before he had adopted the natural style of Hunt and Wordsworth. In 1816 he would not have employed the anapestic quatrains of Moore and Byron and eighteenth-century phrases such as "My Fair." In the two later versions, this particular phrase is revised. It is arresting and significant to find this song, probably the last poem which Keats composed in the style of eighteenth-century poetry, transcribed by his brother George on the same manuscript with the *Sonnet to Solitude*, the first poem which he composed in the natural style of Hunt and Wordsworth.

In this period, it is probable, another song, *Stay ruby-breasted Warbler, stay*, was composed either by Keats or by his brother George. Lord Houghton published this song in the Aldine edition of Keats's poems in 1876. Harry Buxton Forman discovered a tran-

script of the song in George Keats's Scrap-book in which it is signed "G.K.," and rejected the song therefore from his canon of Keats's poems. Ernest de Sélincourt discovered a transcript of the song in Woodhouse's Book of Transcripts and restored the song to Keats. "It is highly probable," he said, "that Woodhouse obtained these poems from autograph MSS. in the possession of Brown." Woodhouse obtained the song, however, from Mary Frogley instead of from Brown. In his Scrap-book, he made two transcripts of the song. One of the transcripts is in that series of transcripts of the poems which Kirkman copied into Mary Frogley's volume of manuscript poetry. The other is signed "J.K." and subscribed in shorthand "From Mary Frogley." Each of Woodhouse's three transcripts of the song is entitled: "— Song — Tune Julia to the Wood-robin." In the case of this song, George Keats's authority bears more weight than that of Woodhouse through Mary Frogley and Kirkman. We must, therefore, attribute this song to George Keats instead of to Keats.

In the epistle which George Felton Mathew wrote to Keats in November 1815 he described Keats's poems as follows (I quote the opening stanzas of his epistle from the original version in Woodhouse's Scrap-book):

TO A POETICAL FRIEND. (J. Keats.)

Oh thou, who delightest in fanciful song,  
And tellest strange tales of the elf, & the fay;  
Of giants tyrannic, whose talismans strong  
Have power to charm the fair ladies astray.

Of courteous knights, & of high mettled steeds,  
Of forests enchanted, and marvelous streams,  
Of bridges, & castles, & desperate deeds,  
Of magical curses, & fair ladies' screams.

Of captures, and rescues, and mutual loves,  
Of blisses abounding in fair ladies' bowers,  
Of murmuring music, melodious groves,  
And beauty reclined on a pillow of flowers.

Keats did not compose romantic tales in this period, but he read them with Mathew and, we suspect, reacted to them very much as Mathew did. When Mathew wrote this epistle, however, Keats had come to London, was making new friends, was reading and assimilating the natural poetry of Leigh Hunt and Wordsworth, and was outgrowing the trivial, sentimental romanticism of Mathew's coterie.

## CHAPTER II

### *SLEEP AND POETRY, I STOOD TIP-TOE, ETC.*

#### I

THE second major period of Keats's poetry began in October 1815 with his residence in London as a student in the united hospitals, Guy's and St. Thomas's, in Southwark. For more than two years, we have seen, Keats had turned to London, where his brother George was living, for his social and literary intercourse. Since the death of his grandmother in the middle of December 1814 and the removal of his sister to the home of her guardian in Walthamstow, he had been consumed with the desire to leave Edmonton and join his brother in London. At length he found practical reasons which would induce his guardian, Richard Abbey, to permit him to go to London. He persuaded Abbey that Thomas Hammond, the surgeon, was unjust to him and that he would receive more thorough medical instruction in the London hospitals. In April 1827 Abbey told John Taylor that Hammond had not conducted himself as he ought to have done to his young apprentice. In some way or other, it seems, Hammond had provoked Keats's hot temper. In a letter to George Keats in September 1819, Keats said that the matter of the human body is completely changed every seven years and observed: "Seven years ago it was not this hand that clench'd itself against Hammond." The disagreement between Keats and Hammond was not very serious, it is probable, for Hammond released Keats from his apprenticeship and in 1816 gave him a testimonial to present to the examiners of the Court of Apothecaries.

The poems which Keats composed in London in the autumn of 1815 differ radically from those which he had composed in Edmonton. This change in his poetry followed the change that had occurred in the poetry of Leigh Hunt. Hunt composed his juvenile poems, we remember, in the style of eighteenth-century poetry. For ten years after the publication of his *Juvenilia* in 1801, he composed very little poetry. In 1810 he began to edit *The Reflector*, a quarterly magazine of literature and politics, which suspended publication after the issue of the fourth number. In the period from 1810 to 1816 he developed a new style of poetry. He remained a steadfast disciple of Spenser, but changed his manner of imitating him. He turned from the eighteenth-century Spenserians, Thomson, Beattie, and

Shenstone, to the seventeenth-century Spenserians, Drayton, John Fletcher, and William Browne. He turned likewise from Pope, whom he had admired, to Dryden. He began to read, to deride, and at length to admire and to imitate Wordsworth's natural poetry. During his imprisonment in Horsemonger Lane Gaol for libeling the Prince Regent, he studied the *Parnaso Italiano*, an edition of Italian poetry in fifty volumes, and acquired a comprehensive knowledge of Italian poetry of the Renaissance.

Hunt consciously developed his new style of poetry out of the following elements: the natural imagery, the healthy, elementary emotions, and the conversational diction of Wordsworth; the Arcadian pastoral conventions of Spenser and the seventeenth-century Spenserians; the poetic "luxury" or sensuousness of Spenser; the chivalric sentiment of Spenser and Ariosto; the medley style of Pulci and Ariosto, partly lively and partly serious; and the metre, especially the heroic couplets, of Chaucer, Dryden, Chapman, John Fletcher, and William Browne, with varied pauses, triplets, alexandrines, and double rhymes. He developed this style through a series of poems — *Politics and Poetics*, which he published in 1811 in the second number of *The Reflector*; *The Feast of the Poets*, which he published in 1811 in the fourth number of *The Reflector*; *Bacchus, or the Pirates*, which he published in the 1814 edition of *The Feast of the Poets*; a series of Sonnets to Hampstead, which he published in *The Examiner* in 1813, 1814, and 1815; and *The Story of Rimini*, which he published in 1816. He explained the principles of this style of poetry in the voluminous notes to the 1814 and 1815 editions of *The Feast of the Poets* and in essays in *The Round Table*, a department in *The Examiner* in 1815, 1816, and 1817.

Keats had doubtless read the Sonnets to Hampstead in *The Examiner* in 1813 and 1814; but he had not recognized the revolutionary qualities of their style. He learned the principles of Hunt's new style either from the first edition of *The Feast of the Poets* in 1814 or from the second edition in 1815 or very probably from both editions. Charles Cowden Clarke, who was a member of Hunt's coterie, brought Keats to understand and to imitate the new style of poetry which Hunt had developed. On May 17, 1814, Hunt<sup>1</sup> wrote Clarke that he was sending him a copy of *The Descent of Liberty* and apologized for not having sent him a copy of the first edition of *The Feast of the Poets*; and on November 7, 1815 he<sup>1</sup> wrote Clarke that he was having a copy of the second edition bound for him. We can imagine the genial enthusiasm with which Clarke explained Hunt's poetic princi-

<sup>1</sup> Charles Cowden Clarke, *Recollections of Writers*, pp. 192-194.



ples to Keats and the delight with which Keats reacted to Hunt's jaunty but bold judgments of contemporary poets. In the autumn of 1815, Keats accepted *The Feast of the Poets* as his *ars poetica*.

The first principle which Keats learned from Hunt was the principle of naturalism which Wordsworth had introduced into English poetry with his *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. We can trace the evolution of Hunt's judgment of Wordsworth's natural style through the 1811, the 1814, and the 1815 versions of *The Feast of the Poets*. In the 1811 version Hunt parodied Wordsworth's natural style, ridiculed him, and drove him rudely from the feast. When he ridiculed Wordsworth, he confessed afterwards, he knew him only through his deriders. In the 1814 version he said that he was particularly desirous of doing justice to a great living poet, of whom he had spoken with unqualified and therefore unbecoming distaste. He retained his parody of Wordsworth's style, but covered him with a cloud, and dismissed him from the feast in a decorous manner. In the 1815 version he said that he had become a convert, not indeed to what he still considered to be Wordsworth's faults, but to the "immense majority" of his beauties. He gave Wordsworth a seat at the feast and proclaimed him the "Prince of the Bards of his Time."

Hunt's admiration for Wordsworth's poetry was mingled with a dislike for his conservative politics. Hunt and Hazlitt were intensely bitter in their denunciation of Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth as apostates to the cause of liberty. In 1815, while Hunt was residing at 4 Maida Vale, Edgware Road, Wordsworth was brought by Benjamin Robert Haydon to call on Hunt. "He came to thank me," Hunt reported in his *Autobiography*, "for the zeal I had shown in advocating the cause of his genius." "The longer I live, and the older I grow," Hunt exclaimed to Wordsworth, "I feel my respect for your genius to increase, Sir." Haydon, who reported Hunt's expression of admiration for Wordsworth's poetic genius, added that Wordsworth explained his political principles and that Hunt said that he was satisfied. In the first part of 1816, Hunt printed three of Wordsworth's sonnets in *The Examiner* — "How clear, how keen, how marvellously bright," "While not a leaf seems faded; while the fields," and "High is our calling, Friend! — Creative art." The alliance between the two poets was soon broken, however, by Hunt's renewed attacks upon Wordsworth's political principles.

Hunt's interpretation of Wordsworth's naturalism is essential to an understanding of the poems which Keats composed in this period. Hunt derived from Wordsworth the noblest elements of his own poetry; but, being different in temperament and having a different

environment, he transformed and in many respects degraded what he borrowed, and, disliking Wordsworth's conservative reaction in politics, he spoke ungratefully of the poet to whom he owed so much. In his notes to the 1815 edition of *The Feast of the Poets* he interpreted Wordsworth's naturalism as follows:

The theory of Mr. Wordsworth, — if I may venture to give in a few words my construction of the curious and, in many respects, very masterly preface to the Lyrical Ballads, is this; — that owing to a variety of existing causes, among which are the accumulation of men in cities and the necessary uniformity of their occupations, — and the consequent craving for extraordinary incident, which the present state of the world is quick to gratify, the taste of society has become so vitiated and so accustomed to gross stimulants, such as "frantic novels, *sickly* and stupid German tragedies, and deluges of *idle* and *extravagant* stories in verse," as to require the counteraction of some simpler and more primitive food, which should restore to readers their true tone of enjoyment, and enable them to relish once more the beauties of simplicity and nature; — that, to this purpose, a poet in the present age, who looked upon men with his proper eye, as an entertainer and instructor, should chuse subjects as far removed as possible from artificial excitements, and appeal to the great and primary affections of our nature; — thirdly and lastly, that these subjects, to be worthily and effectively treated, should be clothed in language equally artless.

In the text of the poem, Hunt represented Wordsworth as giving a specimen of his exquisite art:

there trembled and came  
A voice, that grew upwards, and gather'd like flame:  
Of nature it told, and of simple delights  
On days of green sunshine, and eye-lifting nights;  
Of summer-sweet isles and their noon-shaded bowers,  
Of mountains, and valleys, trees, waters, and flowers,  
Of hearts, young and happy, and all that they show  
For the home that we came from and whither we go;  
Of wisdom in age by this feeling renew'd,  
Of hopes that stand smiling o'er passions subdu'd,  
Of the springs of sweet waters in evil that lie; —  
Of all, which, in short, meets the soul's better eye  
When we go to meek nature our hearts to restore,  
And bring down the Gods to walk with us once more.

In this passage Hunt gave a perfect example of his adaptation of Wordsworth's natural poetry. He professed entire agreement with Wordsworth's theory. The question is, he said, has Wordsworth achieved his object? In some poems, he admitted, Wordsworth truly represented the healthy, elementary emotions of humanity; but in other poems, he charged, Wordsworth substituted the diseased emotions of natural life for the diseased emotions of artificial life.

He found two defects in Wordsworth's poetry — morbidity and triviality.

How is our passion for stimulants to be allayed by the substitution of stories like Mr. Wordsworth's? He wishes to turn aside our thirst for extraordinary intelligence to more genial sources of interest, and he gives us accounts of mothers who have gone mad at the loss of their children, of others who have killed their's in the most horrible manner, and of hard-hearted masters whose imaginations have revenged upon them the curses of the poor. In like manner, he would clear up and simplicize our thoughts; and he tells us tales of children that have no notion of death, of boys who would halloo to a landscape nobody knew why, and of an hundred inexpressible sensations, intended by nature no doubt to affect us, and even pleasurably so in the general feeling, but only calculated to perplex or sadden us in our attempts at analysis.

Hunt retained in the text the parody of Wordsworth's natural style which he had written in 1811. He represented Wordsworth as spouting

some lines he had made on a straw,  
Showing how he had found it, and what it was for,  
And how, when 't was balanc'd, it stood like a spell! —  
And how, when 't was balanc'd no longer, it fell! —  
A wild thing of scorn he describ'd it to be,  
But said it was patient to heaven's decree —  
Then he gaz'd upon nothing, and looking forlorn,  
Dropt a *natural* tear for *that wild thing of scorn!*

I am told, on very good authority [Hunt remarked in his notes], that this parody upon Mr. Wordsworth's worst style of writing has been taken for a serious extract from him, and panegyricized accordingly, with much grave wonderment how I could find it ridiculous.

Hunt found morbidity and triviality in Wordsworth's description of inanimate nature as well as in his representation of the primary emotions of human beings. The morbidity and triviality, Hunt said, were the results of that dangerous principle of subjectivity which Wordsworth defined as a cardinal principle of his poetry, that feeling should give importance to action and situation rather than that action and situation should give importance to feeling.

The consequence of this, if carried into a system [Hunt objected], would be, that we could make anything or nothing important, just as diseased or healthy impulses told us, . . . till at last, perplexed . . . [by] the importance which every thing had obtained in our imaginations, . . . we might turn from . . . thinking trifling things important, to thinking important things trifling.

Hunt rejected Wordsworth's principle of subjective description and adopted a principle of objective description which he attributed to Chaucer. Hazlitt, who was intimately associated with Hunt,

gave an authoritative explanation of the latter's principle of description. In his review of *The Story of Rimini* in *The Edinburgh Review* for June 1816, Hazlitt said that Hunt had followed the style of ancient poets, such as Chaucer, rather than that of modern poets, such as Wordsworth.

The great distinction between the modern poets and their predecessors, is, that the latter painted more from the eye and less from the mind than the former. They described things and actions as they saw them, without expressing, or at any rate without dwelling on the deep-seated emotions from which the objects derived their interest, or the actions their character.

Comparing Hunt's style with that of the poets of the age of Chaucer, Hazlitt found

the same fresh, lively and artless pictures of external objects, — the same profusion of gorgeous but redundant and needless description, — the same familiarity and even homeliness of diction — and, above all, the simplicity and directness in representing actions and passions in colours true to nature, but without any apparent attention to their effect, or any ostentation, or even visible impression as to their moral operation or tendency.

Hunt's, and more especially Hazlitt's, censure of Wordsworth's subjectivity influenced Keats's judgment of Wordsworth's poetry. In Keats's poetry, we shall find, there was a continuous struggle between the opposing principles of subjectivity and objectivity.

Hunt modified Wordsworth's natural style in two other important respects. In the first place, he mingled Wordsworth's natural imagery with the artificial, Arcadian pastoral conventions of Spenser, Fletcher, and Browne and the fairy conventions of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

In the second place, Hunt was a cockney by temperament and by environment. He loved the social life of the city and above all the association of a small group of congenial friends. Two main themes in his poetry are conversation with friends around the fire-side and holidays with friends in the country. He found fault with Wordsworth for retiring into a solitary communion with nature and, as he termed it, "making a business of reverie." He criticized Wordsworth in the spirit of a townsman.

We are, he thinks, too much crowded together, and too subject, in consequence, to high-fevered tastes and worldly infections. Granted: — he, on the other hand, lives too much apart, and is subject, we think, to low-fevered tastes and solitary morbidities; — but as there is health in both of us, suppose both parties strike a bargain, — he to come among us a little more and get a true sense of our action, — we to go out of ourselves a little oftener and acquire a taste for his contemplation. *We will make more holidays into nature with him*; but he, in fairness, must earn them, as well as ourselves, by sharing our working-

days:—*we will emerge oftener into his fields, sit dangling our legs over his stiles, and cultivate a due respect for his daffodils*, but he, on the other hand, must grow a little better acquainted with our streets, etc.

In his poetry, we feel, Hunt described natural scenes in the spirit of a cockney on a holiday, who emerges into the fields, dangles his legs over the stiles, and cultivates a respect for daffodils. It was unfortunate, indeed, that Keats learned the natural style from Wordsworth through Hunt rather than from Wordsworth alone; for there is undoubtedly a cockney quality in the poems which Keats composed in this period.

Hunt accepted also Wordsworth's principle that the diction of poetry should be "a selection of the real language of men." He rejected the archaic words of Spenser, which he had employed in his juvenile poems, because they "contradict that freshness and natural flow of language, which we have a right to expect in the poet who would touch our affections." "We want," he said, "an unaffected, contemporaneous language, such as our ears and our hearts shall equally recognize, and our own feelings would utter were they as eloquent as the poet's." He made a clear and useful distinction between an artificial style, such as that of Gray and Collins, and a natural style, such as that of Wordsworth. He agreed with Wordsworth "that the language of nature is the best of all languages and that the poet is at his height when he can be most fanciful and most feeling in expressions the most neighbourly and intelligible." He objected, however, to Wordsworth's exclusion of the artificial style of poetry. The artificial style is inferior to the natural style, he admitted, but still it is a truly poetical style. Following Dryden, he cited the "admirable Grecisms" of Milton as examples of the artificial style.

Hunt applied Wordsworth's principle of natural diction in an independent manner by employing the idiom of cockneys as Wordsworth had employed the idiom of rustics. Hunt's diction, however, is not distinctively cockney. Its distinctive characteristic, its unauthorized use of words, was derived from the diction of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poets. He employed one part of speech for another, for instance, and coined one part of speech from another. He employed also unusual words and common words in an unusual sense. In a later connection, I shall analyze the diction of Hunt's *Story of Rimini* in detail. The diction of the poems which Keats composed in this period follows Hunt's very closely.

The *Sonnet to Solitude* is the first poem which Keats composed in the natural style which Hunt had adapted from Wordsworth.

Charles Cowden Clarke said that this sonnet was the first poem which Keats published. Keats sent it to Leigh Hunt, who printed it in *The Examiner* for May 5, 1816. Keats republished it in his *Poems* of 1817. There is a transcript in Woodhouse's Scrap-book and another in Tom Keats's Copy-book. I quote the transcript from Woodhouse's Scrap-book, which is probably in George Keats's autograph and which represents, I believe, the earliest version.

## SONNET

[O So]litude! if I must with thee dwell,  
 [Let it] not be among the jumbled Heap  
 Of murky buildings; climb with me the Steep  
 Nature's Observatory — whence the Dell,  
 Its flowery Slopes; its Rivers chrystal swell  
 May seem a span. Let me thy vigils keep  
 'Mongst Boughs pavilioned, where the Deers swift leap  
 Startles the wild Bee from the fox-glove-bell.

But though I'd gladly trace these scenes with thee  
 Yet the sweet converse of an elegant mind,  
 Whose words are Images of thoughts refin'd  
 Is my Soul's Pleasure. It certainly must be  
 Almost the highest bliss of human Kind,  
 When to thy haunts two kindred spirits flee.

Keats expressed in this sonnet his first reactions to his residence in London. He came to London with high hopes of happiness; but he arrived in the cold, murky season of autumn; and, to be near the hospitals, he took solitary lodgings at 8 Dean Street in the Borough, which he described to Clarke as "a beastly place in dirt, turnings, and windings." Living alone in "a jumbled heap of murky buildings," he felt a nostalgia for Edmonton. He did not appreciate the natural beauty of the country until he came to the city, and did not express his impressions of this natural beauty until he read the natural poetry of Hunt and Wordsworth. In this sonnet occurs the first image which Keats derived from Wordsworth. The "wild Bee" in the "fox-glove-bell" was a reminiscence of the "bees" in Wordsworth's Prefatory Sonnet —

Bees that soar for bloom,  
 High as the highest Peak of Furness Fells,  
 Will murmur by the hour in Foxglove bells . . .

Other details, it is probable, are recollections of the country around Edmonton.

The style is natural but it has artificial elements. Solitude, for instance, is personified, apostrophied, and exhorted in the rhetorical

style of eighteenth-century poetry. The style was improved very much by revisions. In the version which he published in *The Examiner*, Keats revised the verses,

But though I'd gladly trace these scenes with thee  
Yet the sweet converse of an elegant mind. . . ,

into

Ah! fain would I frequent such scenes with thee;  
But the sweet converse of an innocent mind . . .

He removed "elegant mind," the worst phrase in the sonnet, but he added an artificial phrase, "Ah! fain would I frequent." In the final version of the sonnet, which he published in his *Poems* of 1817, he combined the best phrases of the two earlier readings of these verses:

But though I'll gladly trace these scenes with thee,  
Yet the sweet converse of an innocent mind . . .

He altered also the phrase "It certainly must be" of the first version into the more poetic phrase "and it sure must be" of the second and third versions. He improved his spelling and punctuation also through the three versions.

✓ In November 1815 Keats wrote an *Epistle to George Felton Mathew*, the young cockney poetaster, who had influenced the style of the poems which he had composed in 1814 and 1815. In the opening verses of the epistle, he idealized their friendship into a "brotherhood in song" such as that of Beaumont and Fletcher. Mathew, who had an extreme sensibility of temperament, was a sympathetic companion with whom he could "sit, and rhyme and think on Chatterton" and "warm-hearted Shakespeare" and

moralize on Milton's blindness,  
And mourn the fearful dearth of human kindness  
To those who strove with the bright golden wing  
Of genius, to flap away each sting  
Thrown by the pitiless world.

They would recall, Keats intimated, the stories of King Alfred, William Tell, and William Wallace, patriots who fought in the cause of freedom. Mathew, like many conservatives, could praise the patriots of old, although he feared and disliked the patriots of his own day. He complained, we remember, that Keats "was of the sceptical and republican school."

With strange Ovidian fancy, as Sir Sidney Colvin remarked,<sup>2</sup> Keats traced Mathew's natural evolution:

<sup>2</sup> Sir Sidney Colvin, p. 110.

For thou wast once a flowret blooming wild,  
 Close to the source, bright, pure, and undefil'd,  
 Whence gush the streams of song: in happy hour  
 Came chaste Diana from her shady bower . . .  
 Beheld thee, pluck'd thee, cast thee in the stream  
 To meet her glorious brother's greeting beam.  
 I marvel much that thou hast never told  
 How, from a flower, into a fish of gold  
 Apollo chang'd thee, how thou next didst seem  
 A black-eyed swan upon the widening stream;  
 And when thou first didst in that mirror trace  
 The placid features of a human face . . .

Keats confessed to Mathew the struggle of his poetic genius to orient itself and to express itself in an oppressive environment. He complained that his arduous duties in the hospitals were holding his faculties in thrall and that the dark city was stifling his poetic inspiration.

Too partial friend! fain would I follow thee  
 Past each horizon of fine poesy . . .  
 But 't is impossible, far different cares  
 Beckon me sternly from soft "Lydian airs,"  
 And hold my faculties so long in thrall,  
 That I am oft in doubt whether at all  
 I shall again see Phoebus in the morning . . .  
 But might I now each passing moment give  
 To the coy muse, with me she would not live  
 In this dark city, nor would condescend  
 'Mid contradictions her delights to lend.

Keats had entered upon his course of instruction in the London hospitals with enthusiasm. He registered<sup>3</sup> at Guy's Hospital on Sunday, October 1, 1815, paid his fees on Monday, October 2, elected his courses, and was assigned as dresser to Surgeon Lucas. When he went up for his examination before the Court of Examiners of the Society of Apothecaries on July 25, 1816 he was accredited with seven courses of lectures: two on anatomy and physiology, two on the theory and practice of medicine, two on chemistry, and one on materia medica. Besides taking these courses he served as dresser to a surgeon in active practice. His apprenticeship to a country surgeon had not led him to expect such onerous duties as a student in the London hospitals. When he returned to the solitude of his lodgings at night, he might well complain, he was too exhausted in body and mind to read or to compose poetry.

<sup>3</sup> Amy Lowell, Vol. I, p. 74.



The original version of the epistle which Mathew wrote in answer to Keats's epistle is transcribed in Woodhouse's Scrap-book. Mathew responded with warm sympathy and with good sense but in silly verse. He reminded Keats that he owed his poetic inspiration to the Moon, who cherished his childhood with fostering care, instead of to climate and environment.

Oh where did thine infancy open its eyes,  
And who was the nurse that attended thy spring?  
For sure thou art exotic to these frigid skies,  
So splendid the song that thou lovest to sing.

Perhaps thou hast traversed the glorious East,  
And, like the warm breath of luxurious gales  
That wander, mid gardens of flowers, to feast,  
Art tintured with every sweet that prevails.

It is not the climate, nor nature around,  
It is not thy nurse that attended thy youth  
That give thee those blisses that sweetly abound  
In magical powers to bless and to soothe:

Ah! no, 'tis the Queen of those regions of air,  
The gay fields of fancy, thy spirit has bless'd;  
She cherish'd thy childhood with fostering care,  
And nurtured her Boy with the milk of her breast.

or those  
She gave thee them, ere thou couldst wander alone,  
And cheer'd in thy walks amid terror and dread,  
She sung thee to sleep with a song of her own,  
And laid thy young limbs on her flowery bed.

She gave thee those pinions, with which thou delightest  
Sublime o'er her boundless dominions to rove,  
The tongue too she gave thee, with which thou invitest  
The ear to the stories of wonder & love.

Mathew's allusion to the moon as the power which had cherished Keats's childhood with fostering care indicates that Keats had already developed his cult of the moon as the natural symbol of essential beauty. Charles Cowden Clarke<sup>4</sup> told Woodhouse in 1823 that one of the earliest poems which Keats composed was a sonnet to the moon. This cult of the moon, we shall find, was the inspiring principle of *Endymion*.

Mathew employed the same diction and metre as those which Keats had employed three months before but which he had now outgrown. The verses,

<sup>4</sup> Woodhouse's Scrap-book, Pierpont Morgan Library

That give thee those blisses that sweetly abound  
In magical powers to bless and to soothe,

allude to the two last verses of the poem which Keats wrote Mathew on receiving a dome-shaped shell and a copy of Tom Moore's *Golden Chain* from Ann and Caroline Mathew,

I too have my blisses, which richly abound  
In magical powers to bless and to soothe.

In the two last stanzas of his epistle to Keats, Mathew said:

When evening shall free thee from Nature's decays,  
And free thee from study's severest controul,  
Oh! warm thee in Fancy's enlivening rays,  
And wash the dark spots of disease from thy soul.

Oh! let not the spirit of Poesy sleep;  
Of fairies and Genii continue to tell;  
Nor suffer the innocent deer's timid leap  
The wild bee to fright from her flowery bell. —

In the first of these stanzas Mathew replied to Keats's complaint that his surgical studies were holding his poetic faculties in thrall. In the second stanza he alluded to Keats's *Sonnet to Solitude*, in which

the Deers swift leap  
Startles the wild Bee from the fox-glove bell. . . .

Since Mathew's epistle, which was a direct and immediate answer to Keats's epistle, alluded to the sonnet, it is evident, as Miss Lowell pointed out,<sup>5</sup> that Keats composed the sonnet before the epistle.

The theme of Keats's epistle to Mathew, the interference of his surgical studies with his composition of poetry, was suggested by Leigh Hunt's *Politics and Poetics, or the Desperate Situation of a Journalist Unhappily Smitten with a Love of Rhyme*, which was reprinted in the 1815 edition of *The Feast of the Poets*. The conflict between surgery and poetry was a real problem in Keats's life; but if he had not read Hunt's poem he might not have expressed this problem in poetic form.

The pattern of Keats's description of natural scenes in this epistle and in all of his poems of this period was modeled upon a description in Hunt's *Politics and Poetics*:

Oh for a seat in some poetic nook,  
Just hid with trees, and sparkling with a brook,  
Where through the quivering boughs the sun-beams shoot  
Their arrowy diamonds upon flower and fruit,

<sup>5</sup> Amy Lowell, Vol. I, p. 83.

While stealing airs come fuming o'er the stream,  
 And lull the fancy to a waking dream!  
 There shouldst thou come, O first of my desires,  
 What time the noon had spent its fiercer fires,  
 And all the bower, with chequer'd shadows strown,  
 Glow'd with a mellow twilight of its own;  
 There shouldst thou come, and there sometimes with thee  
 Might deign repair the staid Philosophy,  
 To taste thy freshening brook, and trim thy groves,  
 And tell us what good task true glory loves.  
 I see it now! I pierce the fairy glade,  
 And feel the enclosing influence of the shade: —  
 A thousand forms, that sport on summer eves,  
 Glance through the light, and whisper in the leaves,  
 While every bough seems nodding with a sprite,  
 And every air seems hushing the delight,  
 And the calm bliss, fix'd on itself a while,  
 Dimples the unconscious lips into a smile.  
 Anon strange music breathes; — the fairies show  
 Their pranksome crowd; and in grave order go  
 Beside the water, singing, small and clear,  
 New harmonies unknown to mortal ear,  
 Caught upon moonlight nights from some high-wandering sphere.  
 I turn to thee, and listen with fix'd eyes,  
 And feel my spirits mount on winged ecstasies.

The poet seeks a "nook" in the country in which, in the company of the muse of poetry, he is inspired by natural impressions. In this state of ecstasy he discovers the revelries and mysteries of nature which are hidden from mortal senses. He sees a thousand sprites that sport on summer eves and he hears the fairies, led by Ariel, singing the harmonies of the spheres. Into Wordsworth's theory of natural inspiration, Hunt introduced the fairies of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Tempest*. He introduced also descriptive devices and details from Miltons *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* — "What time," "chequer'd shadows," "Might deign repair the staid Philosophy," and "sport on summer eves."

Keats followed this pattern of description in his epistle *To George Felton Mathew*:

Should e'er the fine-eyed maid to me be kind,  
 Ah! surely it must be whene'er I find  
 Some flowery spot, sequester'd, wild, romantic,  
 That often must have seen a poet frantic;  
 Where oaks, that erst the Druid knew, are growing,  
 And flowers, the glory of one day, are blowing;  
 Where the dark-leav'd laburnum's drooping clusters  
 Reflect athwart the stream their yellow lustres,

And intertwined the cassia's arms unite,  
 With its own drooping buds, but very white.  
 Where on one side are covert branches hung,  
 'Mong which the nightingales have always sung  
 In leafy quiet: where to pry, aloof,  
 Atween the pillars of the sylvan roof,  
 Would be to find where violet beds were nestling,  
 And where the bee with cowslip bells was wrestling . . .

Keats retained a little of the eighteenth-century romantic attitude toward nature:

There must be too a ruin dark, and gloomy,  
 To say "joy not too much in all that's bloomy."

For his use of the atrocious adjective "bloomy," he had a precedent in Milton, Dryden, and other poets. Earlier in the epistle, he introduced the fairies:

Or again witness what with thee I've seen,  
 The dew by fairy feet swept from the green,  
 After a night of some quaint jubilee  
 Which every elf and fay had come to see:  
 When bright processions took their airy march  
 Beneath the curved moon's triumphal arch.

The "poetic nook" which Hunt described occurs as "flowery spot" in the *Epistle to George Felton Mathew*; as "leafy nook" in the *Epistle to Charles Cowden Clarke*; as "bowery nook" in *Sleep and Poetry*; and as "tasteful nook" in *I stood tip-toe upon a little hill*.

The *Epistle to George Felton Mathew* was the first of three epistles which Keats wrote in this period. The idea of writing epistles was suggested to him undoubtedly by epistles which he read. He was not influenced by eighteenth-century epistles which were written in closed heroic couplets. He could not have been influenced by Hunt's epistles, none of which was published at this time. He was probably influenced by seventeenth-century epistles, which were written in loose, flexible, and unstopped heroic couplets. He was exploring seventeenth-century poets, such as Beaumont and Fletcher, and William Browne, and he may have discovered Michael Drayton, from whom, a year later, he derived the story of *Endymion*. Charles Cowden Clarke, who was closely associated with Hunt, induced Keats, we may presume, to read seventeenth-century poets from whom Hunt drew elements of his style.

Drayton wrote a series of familiar epistles to his intimate friends and fellow poets, Henry Reynolds, George Sandys, William Browne of Tavistock, and William Drummond of Hawthornden. In the

opening verses of his *Epistle to Reynolds*, he described the friendship in poetry between Reynolds and himself:

My dearly loued friend, how oft haue we  
In winter euenings, meaning to be free,  
To some well chosen place vs'd to retire,  
And there with moderate meate and wine and fire,  
Haue past the howres contentedly with chat,  
Now talk'd of this, and then discoursed of that,  
Spoke our owne verses, 'twixt our selues; if not,  
Other mens lines, which we by chance had got,  
Or some Stage pieces famous long before,  
Of which your happy memory had store.

Keats began his *Epistle to George Felton Mathew* in similar style and thought. Like Drayton, he had been reading "some Stage pieces famous long before."

Sweet are the pleasures that to verse belong,  
And doubly sweet a brotherhood in song;  
Nor can remembrance, Mathew! bring to view  
A fate more pleasing, a delight more true  
Than that in which the brother Poets joy'd,  
Who with combined powers, their wit employ'd  
To raise a trophy to the drama's muses.  
The thought of this great partnership diffuses  
Over the genius loving heart, a feeling  
Of all that's high, and great, and good, and healing.

In these verses, the style of which is more finished than that of the body of the epistle, Keats attained Drayton's delicate poise between familiarity and courtliness.

The *Epistle to George Felton Mathew* is the first poem that Keats composed in loose, flowing heroic couplets. He composed his juvenile poems, we have seen, in the genres and metres of eighteenth-century poetry — Spenserian stanzas, Miltonic octosyllabics, sonnets, odes, apostrophes, epigrams, and songs in anapestic quatrains. After he came to London, however, he followed the theory and practice of Leigh Hunt and composed his poems, with one exception, in loose, unstopped heroic couplets and the strict Italian form of the sonnet.

Hunt defined his principles of versification in the notes to the 1814 and 1815 editions of *The Feast of the Poets*. He censured the smooth closed heroic couplets of the school of Pope upon the principle that harmony in verse depends upon a proper mixture of uniformity and variety, a principle that had been defined by the poets and rhetoricians of the school of taste. In the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, edition of 1800, Wordsworth, who was influenced by the

school of taste, stated that the pleasure which the mind receives from metre depends upon "the perception of similitude in dissimilitude." Hunt said that Pope's couplets are not harmonious because, although they have uniformity, they lack variety. He cited eighteen successive verses from *The Rape of the Lock*, thirteen of which have the medial pause between the fourth and fifth syllables

Hunt censured also the elaborate metres which the romantic poets of the eighteenth century had revived from the poetry of the Renaissance. He reproved Campbell for composing *Gertrude of Wyoming* in Spenserian stanzas. He said that the inherent faults of Spenserian stanzas are a "tendency to circumlocution," a "multitude of similar rhymes," and an "air of direct imitation." In an essay *On Chaucer* in *The Round Table* in *The Examiner* for October 1, 1815, he quoted a letter from a contributor who suggested a source of Chaucer's *Squire's Tale* and desired that the tale be completed either in the "rhymed couplet of Dryden" or in the "swelling stanza of Spenser." He replied to the contributor:

We have an infinite regard for Spenser; but, in spite of our love for Italian romance, all stanzas, particularly those that are remarkable as such, appear to us to be as unfit for the ease and freedom of narrative poetry, as a horse which should have a trick of stopping at every twenty yards, whether you wanted him to get on or not. The couplet, we think, would be the best, nor would it be any drawback on its merits, if the reader were occasionally reminded of Dryden, for the best parts of Dryden's versification are some of the best music of which English rhythm is capable; or, in other words, are imitated from the best part of the versification of Chaucer himself . . .

Hunt insisted that he derived the principles of his heroic couplets from Dryden's *Fables* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. The devices by which he sought to give variety and flexibility to heroic couplets were run-on or overflowing verses, varied medial pauses, alexandrines, triplets, and double rhymes. The alexandrines, the triplets, and, to some extent, the varied medial pauses, he derived undoubtedly from Dryden; but he derived the overflowing verses and the double rhymes from early seventeenth-century poets such as William Browne. He admitted in after years that Dryden beat too much upon the rhymes. He produced, also, sprightly, jaunty, lively, and flowing effects in his heroic couplets by means of the sound and connotation of the words which he chose. He used, for example, a superabundance of present participles ending in -ing, adjectives in -y, and adjectives and adverbs in -ly. His lively heroic couplets suggest perilously, sometimes, the tumbling anapestic couplets in which he composed *The Feast of the Poets*. His heroic couplets had

a revolutionary and, on the whole, a salutary effect upon the versification of his contemporaries. "I had the pleasure," he boasted in his *Autobiography*, "of seeing all the reigning poets, without exception, break up their own heroic couplets into freer modulation (which they never afterwards abandoned)."

When Keats composed his *Epistle to George Felton Mathew* in November 1815, Hunt had published only two poems in his new style of heroic couplets — *Politics and Poetics* and *Bacchus, or the Pirates*, both of which were reprinted in the 1815 edition of *The Feast of the Poets*. In *Politics and Poetics*, Keats found illustrations of the principles of the heroic couplets which Hunt had expounded in his notes to *The Feast of the Poets*. In the one hundred and sixty-two verses of *Politics and Poetics*, there are one alexandrine, five triplets, and ten double rhymes. There are also overflowing couplets and overflowing verses, varied medial pauses, and words of lively sound and connotation.

The versification of the *Epistle to George Felton Mathew* was influenced directly by William Browne of Tavistock as well as by Leigh Hunt. Keats prefaced the group of his epistles in his *Poems* of 1817 by a quotation from Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals* (Book 2, Song 3, vv. 748-750):

Among the rest a shepherd (though but young  
Yet hartned to his pipe) with all the skill  
His few yeeres could, began to fit his quill.

Browne's pastorals represent the decadence of the school of Spenser in the first half of the seventeenth century. He imitated Spenser's complex story, allegory, sensuous imagery, and Arcadian pastoral conventions, but he employed loose, overflowing heroic couplets instead of Spenserian stanzas. The threads of his story are lost in the labyrinth of his descriptions. He diluted everything which he imitated from Spenser and his style in general is extremely diffuse. His heroic couplets are so much like Hunt's that their influence upon Keats's heroic couplets cannot always be distinguished from that of Hunt's.

From either Browne or from Hunt or from both, Keats derived the following characteristics of his heroic couplets — varied medial pauses, overflowing verses and overflowing couplets, double rhymes, and the accentuation of final syllables of polysyllabic rhyme words (thee/poesy, jubilee/ see, and on/Chatterton). From Hunt rather than from Browne, he learned to employ an abundance of present participles, which, especially in the rhymes, gives a lively, lilting effect. And from Hunt alone he acquired the device of varying his

couplets with triplets, only one of which occurs in his *Epistle to George Felton Mathew* (tell/fell/Tell). Keats's couplets are less perfect in technique than Browne's and Hunt's; for, in his inexperience, he tended to exaggerate the characteristics of the couplets of his masters.

In the *Epistle to George Felton Mathew*, Keats either alluded to or imitated Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Beaumont and Fletcher, Drayton, William Browne, Chatterton, Burns, and Leigh Hunt. He had escaped, but not without scars, from the sentimental and romantic poets whom he had read with Mathew in 1814 and 1815. He continued to read Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, but rejected the artificial and imitative style of the eighteenth-century schools of Spenser and Milton. He accepted and imitated, without reserve and without qualification, the new poetic style which Hunt had compounded from elements from the styles of Wordsworth, Spenser, Dryden, William Browne, and other poets.

At the end of 1815 or the beginning of 1816, Keats left his solitary lodgings in the dingy Borough and took lodgings in St. Thomas's Street with three fellow students of surgery, George Cooper, George Wilson Mackereth, and Henry Stephens. This arrangement was made, it is said, at the suggestion of Astley Cooper, the great surgeon, who took an interest in Keats and recommended him to the care of his own dresser, George Cooper. Henry Stephens wrote his reminiscences of Keats for Lord Houghton in 1847. He also related his reminiscences to Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson, who retold them in *The Asclepiad* for April 1884. I quote Sir Sidney Colvin's selection of paragraphs from these two sets of reminiscences.

Whether it was in the latter part of the year 1815 or the early part of the year 1816 that my acquaintance with John Keats commenced I cannot say. We were both students at the united hospitals of St Thomas's and Guy's, and we had apartments in a house in St Thomas's Street, kept by a decent respectable woman of the name of Mitchell I think. [After naming his other fellow students, Sir Sidney Colvin said, Stephens continued:] John Keats being alone, and to avoid the expense of having a sitting room to himself, asked to join us, which we readily acceded to. We were therefore constant companions, and the following is what I recollect of his previous history from conversation with him. Of his parentage I know nothing, for upon that subject I never remember his speaking, I think he was an orphan. He had been apprenticed to a Mr Hammond surgeon of Southgate from whence he came on the completion of his time to the hospitals. His passion, if I may so call it, for poetry was soon manifested. He attended lectures and went through the usual routine but he had no desire to excel in that pursuit . . . He was called by his fellow students "little Keats," being at his full growth no more than five feet high. . . . In a room, he was always at the window, peering into space, so that the window-seat was spoken of by his comrades



as Keats's place. . . . In the lecture room he seemed to sit apart and to be absorbed in something else, as if the subject suggested thoughts to him which were not practically connected with it. He was often in the subject and out of it, in a dreamy way.

He never attached much consequence to his own studies in medicine, and indeed looked upon the medical career as the career by which to live in a workaday world, without being certain that he could keep up the strain of it. He nevertheless had a consciousness of his own powers, and even of his own greatness, though it might never be recognised. . . . Poetry was to his mind the zenith of all his aspirations: the only thing worthy the attention of superior minds so he thought: all other pursuits were mean and tame. He had no idea of fame or greatness but as it was connected with the pursuits of poetry, or the attainment of poetical excellence. (The greatest men in the world were the poets and to rank among them was the chief object of his ambition.) It may readily be imagined that this feeling was accompanied with a good deal of pride and conceit, and that amongst mere medical students he would walk and talk as one of the Gods might be supposed to do when mingling with mortals. This pride exposed him, as may be readily imagined, to occasional ridicule, and some mortification.

Having a taste and liking for poetry myself, though at that time but little cultivated, he regarded me as something a little superior to the rest, and would gratify himself frequently by shewing me some lines of his writing, or some new idea which he had struck out. We had frequent conversation on the merits of particular poets, but our tastes did not agree. He was a great admirer of Spenser, his *Faerie Queene* was a great favourite with him. Byron was also in favour, Pope he maintained was no poet, only a versifier. He was fond of imagery, the most trifling similes appeared to please him. Sometimes I ventured to show him some lines which I had written, but I always had the mortification of hearing them condemned, indeed he seemed to think it presumption in me to attempt to tread along the same pathway as himself at however humble a distance.

He had two brothers, who visited him frequently, and they worshipped him. They seemed to think their brother John was to be exalted, and to exalt the family name. I remember a student from St Bartholomew's Hospital who came often to see him, as they had formerly been intimate, but though old friends they did not cordially agree. Newmarsh or Newmarch (I forget which was his name) was a classical scholar, as was Keats, and therefore they scanned freely the respective merits of the Poets of Greece and Rome. Whenever Keats showed Newmarch any of his poetry it was sure to be ridiculed and severely handled.

Newmarch was a light-hearted and merry fellow, but I thought he was rather too fond of mortifying Keats, but more particularly his brothers, as their praise of their brother John amounted almost to idolatry, and Newmarch and they frequently quarrelled. Whilst attending lectures he would sit and instead of copying out the lecture, would often scribble some doggerel rhymes among the notes of Lecture, particularly if he got hold of another student's syllabus. In my syllabus of chemical lectures he scribbled many lines on the paper cover. This cover has been long torn off, except one small piece on which is the following fragment of doggerel rhyme:—

Give me women, wine and snuff  
Until I cry out, "hold! enough"  
You may do so, sans objection  
Until the day of resurrection.

This is all that remains, and is the only piece of his writing which is now in my possession. He was gentlemanly in his manners and when he condescended to talk upon other subjects he was agreeable and intelligent. He was quick and apt at learning, when he chose to give his attention to any subject. He was a steady quiet and well behaved person, never inclined to pursuits of a low or vicious character.<sup>6</sup>

We are fortunate in having estimates of Keats's personality in successive periods of his life by friends of diverse personalities. George Felton Mathew, the sentimental young poet, and Henry Stephens, the earnest young student of surgery, who were closely associated with Keats at the end of 1815 and the beginning of 1816, remembered and somewhat exaggerated different qualities in Keats's personality. In their differently colored recollections, however, the essential qualities of Keats's personality stand out clear and vivid. He was lively, sociable, manly, generous, and confident. He was modest by nature but, like most very young men, was vain of his opinions and intolerant of opinions which differed from his own. He had not yet developed that objectivity of judgment, that negative capability, which was the chief characteristic of his mind from the beginning of 1817 to the end of his life. He offended Mathew by expressing radical political principles, and Stephens by expressing a contempt for surgery. They liked Keats, but the resentment which he provoked rankled in their minds and appeared in the recollections which they wrote thirty years afterwards. Stephens' story of Newmarsh's (or Newmarch's) mortification of Keats is, I believe, exaggerated. Keats was too quick-tempered to endure much ridicule from anyone.

Stephens' recollections recreate the setting of that struggle between poetry and surgery which Keats expressed in his *Epistle to George Felton Mathew*. They confirm but add nothing to our knowledge of Keats's poetic taste in this period. Stephens was incapable of perceiving, it is evident, the evolution that was taking place in Keats's poetic style.

Sir Sidney Colvin<sup>7</sup> and H. B. Forman<sup>8</sup> quoted another description of Keats as a medical student from Walter Cooper Dendy's *The Philosophy of Mystery*, which was published in 1841.

Even in the lecture-room of St. Thomas's, I have seen Keats in a deep poetic dream; his mind was on Parnassus with the muses. And here is a quaint fragment which he one evening scribbled in our presence, while the precepts of Sir Astley Cooper fell unheeded on his ear.

<sup>6</sup> Sir Sidney Colvin, pp. 30-32.

<sup>7</sup> Sir Sidney Colvin, *Keats* (EML Series).

<sup>8</sup> H. B. Forman, *Variorum Edition*, Vol. III, p. 276.

This fragment, which Dendy said that Keats scribbled in the lecture room of St. Thomas's, relates the beginning of an adventure of Alexander the Conqueror with an Indian maid whom he found, in his wayfaring in India, sleeping upon herbs and flowers. It is written in prose in a crude imitation of mediaeval English diction.

Professor B. Ifor Evans, in an article in *The Times Literary Supplement* for May 31, 1934, has cast doubt upon the authenticity of this fragment. Professor Evans discovered, in the first place, that Dendy had probably left St. Thomas's Hospital before Keats entered. "In the records of St. Thomas's Hospital," he said, "there are entries to show that a certain Walter Cooper Dendy was a Dresser to Mr. Cline for the 'Autumnal Session' of 1813, and that on October 4, 1813, he paid a fee. His name does not appear on the lists for 1812, or 1814; he became a member of the College of Surgeons in 1814 and later practised in Blackfriars." Professor Evans, quoting the Secretary of the Medical School of St. Thomas's Hospital, admitted that, although Dendy's career as a student was over before Keats entered the hospital, he "may have become a junior demonstrator while under Cline, and as such he may have given Keats a hand."

Professor Evans pointed out, in the second place, that there is much in Dendy's other writings to suggest that he invented the story of Keats's composition of the fragment of Alexander and the Indian maid. In his *Legends of the Lintel and the Ley*, which he published in 1863, Dendy gave an obviously imaginary account of a meeting on Box Hill between Keats and Hazlitt, in which Keats speaks again as a victim of poetic frenzy.

I am reluctant, however, to believe that Dendy invented the incident of Keats's composition of the fragment of Alexander and the Indian maid. It is quite possible that he had some connection with St. Thomas's Hospital while Keats was a student. His description of Keats as a medical student agrees with those of Henry Stephens and Cowden Clarke. The thought and the style of the fragment — the archaic diction, the reminiscences of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, and the Indian maid who reappears in the fourth book of *Endymion* — indicate, if they do not prove, that Keats composed it.

By the beginning of 1816, I believe, Keats had formed a friendship with Joseph Severn, an engraver's apprentice, who was striving, in spite of poverty and discouragement, to become a painter. Severn, who was careless in the matter of dates, said in one set of reminiscences that he met Keats in 1813, and in another that he met him in 1817. He was mentioned by Keats, however, in a letter to

Charles Cowden Clarke on December 17, 1816. He drew a charming picture of Keats as he was at the beginning of their friendship. In a letter to Charles Brown on April 15, 1830, he said:

I knew Keats as far back as 1813 I was introduced to him by Haslam. He was then studying at Guy's Hospital, yet much inclined to the Muses. I remember on the second meeting he read me the Sonnet on Solitude, in which is the line

To start the wild bee from the toxglove bell.

He was at that time more playful in his manner, the world seem'd to have nothing to do with him. Poetry was evidently at that time his darling hope. He disliked the surgery, and complained that his guardian, Mr Abbey, forced him to it against his will. . . . At my first acquaintance with him he gave me the compleat idea of a Poet — 'twas an imagination so tempered by gentleness of manner and steady vivacity, that I never saw him without arguing on his future success. At that time he had no morose feeling, or even idea. He never spoke of any one, but by saying something in their favor. . . . At that time he was not well acquainted with painting, but soon acquired a very deep knowledge of it.<sup>9</sup>

In the first half of 1816, Keats continued to take part in the social life of the Mathews and their friends. In February 1816 he wrote the valentine *Hadst thou liv'd in days of old* for his brother George to give to Mary Frogley. Woodhouse made four transcripts of the valentine, two of which are in his Scrap-book, one in his Common-place Book, and one in his Book of Transcripts. Keats published the poem in his *Poems* of 1817, carefully removing all traces of its form as a valentine. Woodhouse is the sole authority for the form of the poem as a valentine.

Editors, biographers, and critics have asserted that Woodhouse said that Keats wrote this valentine for his brother George to send to Georgiana Augusta Wylie on February 14, 1816. I shall quote the notes which Woodhouse prefixed to his various transcripts in order to destroy this error, which has enjoyed a long and untroubled existence.<sup>10</sup> At the head of one of the transcripts in the Scrap-book, Woodhouse wrote:

In page 36 of Keats's published poems, are lines "To \*\*\*." These have been much altered, prior to publication, from the first copy, which was sent as a valentine on 14 Feb<sup>y</sup>. 1816 to Miss Mary F. — The following is a transcript of the letter sent — The date is fixed by the post mark. —

<sup>9</sup> William Sharp, *Life and Letters of Joseph Severn*, p. 162.

<sup>10</sup> After this statement had been set up in type, H. W. Garrod announced his independent discovery of the meaning of Woodhouse's notes (*Times Literary Supplement* for Sept. 5, 1935.)

At the head of the other transcript in the Scrap-book, Woodhouse wrote:

In page 36 of Keats's poems published in 1817 are lines, addressed "to \*\*\* (Mary). — The published lines were much altered from those originally sent, which were written at the request of Geo: Keats & sent as a valentine to the Lady in question — The following is a copy of the original valentine which is now in the lady's custody — The post-brand bears date the 14 February 1816. — This was one of 3 poetical valentines written by him at the same time.

At the head of the transcript in the Commonplace Book, Woodhouse wrote:

The lines at p. 36 of Keats's printed poems are altered from a copy of verses written by K at the request of his brother George, and by the latter sent as a valentine to the Lady. — The following is a copy of the lines as orig<sup>y</sup> written.

And at the head of the transcript in the Book of Transcripts, Woodhouse wrote:

These lines were written by K at his Brother George's request & sent as a valentine to a lady (Miss Frogley [in shorthand]) from whose copy I have transcribed them. They were afterwards altered for Publication — and will be found with the variations at p. 36 of the first volume of Poems he published.

There were three valentines written by him on that [same?] occasion.

The erroneous assumption that Keats wrote this valentine for his brother George to send to Georgiana Augusta Wylie grew up, it seems, in the following way. Sir Sidney Colvin and Harry Buxton Forman made use of Woodhouse's Commonplace Book in the preparation of their editions and biographies of Keats. Knowing only the note in which Woodhouse said that the poem was "written by K. at the request of his brother George, and by the latter sent as a valentine to the Lady," they assumed and stated that the lady was Georgiana Augusta Wylie, who became the wife of George Keats in May, 1818. In 1913 the Marquess of Crewe acquired Woodhouse's Book of Transcripts, in which Woodhouse said in shorthand that the lady in question was Mary Frogley. Colvin, Forman, and de Sélincourt examined this book, but they continued to state in their editions and biographies that the lady was Miss Wylie. Miss Lowell examined the Scrap-book, in which Woodhouse said that Keats wrote the valentine for his brother George to send to Miss Mary F.; but, accepting as an absolute fact Colvin's assumption that Keats wrote the valentine for his brother to send to Miss Wylie, and assuming that Woodhouse obtained the valentine from Keats himself, she decided that Keats purposely misled Woodhouse as to the name of the lady.

Woodhouses's transcripts of the valentine differ slightly in phraseology, punctuation, and capitalization, for he revised three of his transcripts from the printed poem. One of the transcripts in the Scrap-book is closest to the original, for it contains an ungrammatical verse which is corrected in the other transcripts:

From the which four milky plumes . . .

In the second transcript in the Scrap-book this verse is corrected:

From which bend four milky plumes . . .

In a note on this corrected verse Woodhouse said:

This line I have corrected from the printed poem — In the original it is written "From the which four milky plumes" & without a verb. — The mistake was probably made by G. K. in copying it out.

I quote the version of the first and most literal transcript in the Scrap-book.

Hadst thou lived in days of old,  
Oh! what wonders had been told  
Of thy lively dimpled face  
And thy footsteps full of grace;  
Of thy hair's luxurious darkling,  
Of thine eyes' expressive sparkling,  
And thy voice's swelling rapture,  
Taking hearts a ready capture.  
Oh! if thou hadst breathed then  
Thou hadst made the Muses ten.  
Couldst thou wish for lineage higher  
Than twin sister of Thalia?  
At least for ever, ever more,  
Will I call the Graces four.

Hadst thou lived when chivalry  
Lifted up her lance on high,  
Tell me what thou wouldst have been:  
Ah! I see the silver sheen  
Of thy brodered floating vest,  
Covering half thine Ivory breast;  
Which, Oh Heavens! I should see,  
But that cruel destiny  
Has placed a golden cuirass there,  
Keeping secret what is fair. —  
Like light in wreathed cloudlets nested,  
Thy hair in gilden casque is rested,  
From *the which* four milky plumes,  
Like the fleur de Luce's blooms,  
Springing from an indian vase.  
See, with what a stately pace:

Moves thine alabaster steed  
 Servant of heroic deed!  
 O'er his limbs his trappings glow,  
 Like the northern lights on snow.  
 Mount his back — thy sword unsheath!

Magician's  
 Sign of the Enchanter's death;  
 Bane of the Enchanter's spell  
 Silencer of dragon's yell.  
 But ah! thou this wilt never do,  
 Thou art an enchantress too:  
 And thou sure wilt never spill  
 Blood of those whose eyes can kill.

Ah me! whither shall I flee?  
 Thou hast metamorphosed me:  
 Do not let me sigh and pine,  
 Prythee be my valentine!

The three other transcripts are dated in subscript "14 Feb<sup>y</sup> 1816."

Keats derived the style and substance of this valentine from Spenser and the poets of the seventeenth-century school of Spenser. In the first part of the poem he fancied that, had Miss Frogley lived in the days of classical antiquity, she would have been regarded as a goddess. The conceit,

Oh! if thou hadst breathed then  
 Thou hadst made the Muses ten,

was drawn either from Drayton's sonnet *To the Celestial Numbers* or from Shakespeare's thirty-eighth sonnet. It was drawn more probably from Drayton's sonnet, for Keats was reading Drayton's poems at this time, and did not read Shakespeare's sonnets very closely before the spring of 1817. The conceit,

At least for ever, ever more,  
 Will I call the Graces four,

was derived from Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* for April. The greater part of the substance of the poem was drawn from Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. Keats fancied that, had Miss Frogley lived in the days of chivalry, she would have been Britomart the Maiden Knight of Chastity, who rescued Amoret from Busirane, the Enchanter, who held her under a spell in his castle. Woodhouse, who felt the Spenserian quality of the valentine, compared Keats's "alabaster steed Servant of heroic deed" with Spenser's "trusty sword the servant of his might."

Keats wrote the valentine in the graceful, fanciful, artificial style of the poetry of the seventeenth-century Spenserians. He modelled

the metre, I believe, upon the heptasyllabic couplets of Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*. He had been reading the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, we know, for he alluded to these "brother Poets" in his *Epistle to George Felton Mathew*. He employed the delicately archaic and artificial diction of the seventeenth-century Spenserians. He derived the word "darkling," however, from the eighteenth-century schools of Spenser and Milton. Milton used "darkling" as an adverb; Thomson, as an adverb; Shenstone, Charlotte Smith, and Coleridge, as an adjective; and Mary Tighe, as an adverb and an adjective. Keats employed it in the valentine as a noun and in later poems as an adverb and as an adjective.

Keats liked the valentine well enough to revise it and publish it in his *Poems* of 1817. He removed every trace of its original form as a valentine and every trace of the identity of the lady to whom it had been addressed. He revised the poem under the influence of Hunt's *Story of Rimini*. He improved the smoothness of its rhythm and the correctness of its style, but impaired the vividness of its imagery and the good taste of its personal description. He replaced concrete, definite words with abstract, indefinite words. He revised "lively dimpled face" into "lively countenance"; "indian vase" into "costly vase", and "gilden casque" into "knightly casque." He added also seven abstract nouns that end in "-ness" — brightness, lightness, richness, waviness, neatness, coolness, and sweetness. The chief defect in the published version is its indelicacy of personal description.

Add too, the sweetness  
Of thy honied voice; the neatness  
Of thine ankle lightly turn'd:  
With those beauties, scarce discern'd,  
Kept with such sweet privacy,  
That they seldom meet the eye  
Of the little loves that fly  
Round about with eager pry.  
Saving when, with freshening lave,  
Thou dipp'st them in the taintless wave,  
Like twin water lillies, born  
In the coolness of the morn.

The "neatness Of thine ankle lightly turn'd" is pure cockney. The beauties scarce discerned save when dipped in the taintless wave came, as W. T. Read suggested,<sup>11</sup> from Spenser's description of the two "naked damzelles" in the little lake in the Bower of Bliss.

<sup>11</sup> W. T. Read, *Keats and Spenser*, Heidelberg, 1897.



Keats degraded Spenser's beautiful sensuousness into saccharine indelicacy in the style of *The Story of Rimini*.

In his *Poems* of 1817, Keats published a sonnet without giving any indication of the time at which he composed it or of the lady to whom he addressed it.

To \* \* \*

Had I a man's fair form, then might my sighs  
 Be echoed swiftly through that ivory shell  
 Thine ear, and find thy gentle heart; so well  
 Would passion arme me for the enterprize.  
 But ah! I am no knight whose foeman dies;  
 No cuirass glistens on my bosom's swell;  
 I am no happy shepherd of the dell  
 Whose lips have trembled with a maiden's eyes.  
 Yet must I dote upon thee, — call thee sweet,  
 Sweeter by far than Hybla's honied roses  
 When steep'd in dew rich to intoxication.  
 Ah! I will taste that dew, for me 'tis meet,  
 And when the moon her pallid face discloses,  
 I'll gather some by spells, and incantation.

A transcript of this sonnet in Tom Keats's Copy-book differs from the printed version, Forman said,<sup>12</sup> only in the error of copying "incantations" for "incantation" in the last verse.

Keats composed this sonnet, I believe, in the winter or in the early spring of 1816 after he had come under the influence of the pastoral and chivalric poetry of the seventeenth-century school of Spenser and before he had been affected very much by the cockney chivalry of Hunt's *Story of Rimini*. It differs in style and in spirit from poems such as *Calidore*, which Keats composed after he had read and assimilated *The Story of Rimini*. He composed it in the same state of mind as that in which he composed the valentine to Mary Frogley. The first verse, "Had I a man's fair form, then might my sighs," recalls the first verse of the valentine, "Hadst thou lived in days of old." The chivalric metaphor,

But ah! I am no knight whose foeman dies;  
 No cuirass glistens on my bosom's swell. . . ,

recalls the fancy in the valentine that, had Miss Frogley lived in the days of chivalry, she would have been a maiden knight, like Britomart, her locks resting in a "gilden casque" and her breasts covered by a "golden cuirass." The "spells and incantation" recall the "Enchanter's spell" in the valentine. The verses,

<sup>12</sup> H. B. Forman, Variorum Edition, Vol. I, p. 40.

I am no happy shepherd of the dell  
Whose lips have trembled with a maiden's eyes,

are pure seventeenth-century pastoral The image of "Hybla's honied roses" was a reminiscence of *Julius Caesar* (V. i. 34-35): "your words . . . rob the Hybla bees, and leave them honeyless." Keats associated this image with Shakespeare; for in his essay *On Kean as a Shakespearian Actor*, which he wrote in December 1817, he said that "to one learned in Shakespearian hieroglyphics" Kean's "tongue must seem to have robbed the Hybla bees and left them honeyless!"

Keats addressed this sonnet, I believe, as he had addressed the valentine, to Mary Frogley or to some other lady in the coterie of the Mathews. He revealed in the sonnet that painful consciousness of his short stature which inhibited the natural development of his amorous impulses and made him ill at ease, suspicious, and jealous in his relations with women. Referring to his morbid feelings in the presence of women, he wrote Bailey in July 1818: "After all I do think better of Womankind than to suppose they care whether Mister John Keats five feet high likes them or not." He was oblivious of the perfection of feature, the vividness of eyes and hair, and the vivacity of expression which his friends admired in him. "I cannot believe," he wrote Miss Brawne in July 1819, "there ever was or ever could be any thing to admire in me especially as far as sight goes . . . I hold that place among Men which snubnos'd brunnettes with meeting eyebrows do among women. . . ."

In the late winter or in the early spring of 1816, while he was still reading and enjoying Mary Tighe's poetry in the coterie of the Mathews, Keats composed a sonnet in memory of his grandmother, Alice Jennings. Charles Cowden Clarke<sup>13</sup> told Richard Woodhouse in 1823 that Mrs. Jennings had been kind to her grandchildren and that the poet had been her favorite. The ties which bound Keats to his grandmother were deep and intimate. Her home in Edmonton, in which his mother, disappointed and ill, had found refuge in 1805 and in which she had died in 1810, was the only home which he could remember. For three years, while he was serving his apprenticeship with the surgeon in Edmonton, he had lived in close intimacy with his grandmother.

I discovered the existence of this sonnet in a note in shorthand which Woodhouse jotted down in his Scrap-book. In this book, as we have seen, there is a series of manuscripts, numbered 1, 2, 3, 4,

<sup>13</sup> Woodhouse's Scrap-book, Pierpont Morgan Library.

This sonnet would seem to have been written on the death of some person -  
 probably a female -  
 , ver o K e q 1 - 4 - / u l - 7 l 5 n 1 : 1 2 o l o o x / 4 o o 2 7 - / 4 8 1 5 w  
 } v : 6 ( 4 = 2 8 ) i n e c - 1 - n // 1 - 7 l - w 3 1 2 / Feb 2 1819.

SHORTHAND NOTE BY RICHARD WOODHOUSE ON THE SONNET WHICH KEATS WROTE ON THE  
 DEATH OF HIS GRANDMOTHER MRS. ALICE JENNINGS

Reproduced from Woodhouse's Scrap-book by permission of the Pierpont Morgan Library

The inscription may be translated into longhand as follows:

"Inquired of K whether it was not so/ and he said he had written it on the death of his grandmother/ about  
 Feb. 2 it was [or about Feb 27?]/ but that he had never told any one before (not even his brother)  
 the occasion upon which it was written// He said he was tenderly attached to her// Feb 2 1819



5, 6, 7, 10, 11, and 12, on which Woodhouse transcribed from Mary Frogley's volume of manuscript poems a group of Keats's juvenile poems. On the back of manuscript 7 Woodhouse wrote a note, which, according to his method of notation, refers to the poem on manuscript 8. In this note he wrote in longhand:

This sonnet would seem to have been written on the death of some person — & probably a female —

In February, 1819, he added a note in shorthand:

Inquired of K whether it was not so/ and he said he had written it on the death of his grandmother/ about Feb. 2 it was [or about Feb. 27?] <sup>14</sup>/ but that he had never told any one before (not even his brother) the occasion upon which it was written// He said he was tenderly attached to her/ Feb<sup>y</sup> 1819.

Unfortunately manuscript 8, upon which Woodhouse transcribed this sonnet, is missing; but fortunately he made more than one transcript of most of Keats's poems. In another section of the Scrap-book he transcribed a sonnet which Keats composed manifestly upon the death of some woman:

SONNET. —

As from the darkening gloom a silver dove  
Upsoars, and darts into the Eastern light,  
On pinions that nought moves but pure delight;  
So fled thy soul into the realms above,  
Regions of peace and everlasting love;  
Where happy spirits, crowned with circlets bright  
Of starry beam, and gloriously bedight,  
Taste the high joy none but the bless'd can prove.  
There thou or joinest the immortal Quire  
In melodies, that even Heaven fair  
Fill with superior bliss, or, at desire  
Of the Omnipotent Father, cleavest the air,  
On holy message sent. — What pleasures higher?  
Wherefore does any grief my joy impair? —

— 1816.

From Mary Frogley [in shorthand].

There is a second transcript of this sonnet in Woodhouse's Commonplace Book and a third in his Book of Transcripts. The second transcript is signed "J. K." and dated "1816" and the third is dated "1816."

John Taylor, who cooperated with Woodhouse in collecting facts

<sup>14</sup> I am not sure that I have translated this phrase correctly. See photographic reproduction of the shorthand note on p. 98.

about Keats's poems, referred to this sonnet on April 20, 1827 in his memorandum of Richard Abbey's recollections of Keats.

One of Keats's most beautiful Sonnets [Taylor said] is addressed to his Grand-mother. It might be thought that he was speaking of a young and beautiful Woman, so actively had her goodness & affection filled him with pure & finest Love for her. —

*As from the darkening gloom* is undoubtedly the sonnet which Keats told Woodhouse that he composed on the death of his grand-mother. In the first place, this sonnet corresponds to the facts of Woodhouse's note on the sonnet that is missing and to Taylor's description of that sonnet. In the second place, Woodhouse obtained this sonnet from Mary Frogley, the person from whom he obtained the missing one. It is unlikely that Keats composed two different sonnets on the deaths of two women, and still more unlikely that Mary Frogley possessed copies of them.

Keats wrote this sonnet in the sentimental and artificial style of the sonnets which he composed at the end of 1814 and the beginning of 1815, the sonnets *To Lord Byron*, *To Chatterton*, and *Written on the day Mr Leigh Hunt left Prison*. If Woodhouse had not dated the sonnet "1816," I should decide that it was composed at the beginning of 1815. Accepting Woodhouse's dating, I place its composition in February or March 1816. In the first place, it was composed in the period of Keats's intimacy with the Mathews in 1816 — that is, in the first part of 1816 — for it was preserved by Mary Frogley, a member of the coterie of the Mathews, and it was influenced in its diction and in its imagery by Mary Tighe's *Psyche*, a poem which was read and admired in this coterie. In the second place, it is more probable the Keats would revert to the eighteenth-century style of his juvenile poems in the winter or early spring of 1816 than in the spring, summer, or autumn of 1816, when he came more completely under the influence of Leigh Hunt's natural style.

The imagery of the sonnet was derived, as I have suggested, from Mary Tighe's *Psyche*, a sentimental, moral allegory in Spenserian stanzas. The imagery of the opening verses,

As from the darkening gloom a silver dove  
Upsoars, and darts into the Eastern light,  
On pinions that nought moves but pure delight;  
So fled thy soul into the realms above,  
Regions of peace and everlasting love. . . .

is a variation of the imagery of a stanza of the poem *To Some Ladies*, which Keats wrote to the Misses Mathew in the late summer of 1815:

If a cherub, on pinions of silver descending,  
 Had brought me a gem from the fret-work of heaven;  
 And smiles, with his star-cheering voice sweetly blending,  
 The blessings of Tighe had melodiously given. . . .

The "silver dove" and the "pinions of silver" were suggested by *Psyche*, in which the dove guides Psyche in her search for Cupid. The image of the "silver dove" upsoaring "from the darkening gloom" was derived from *Psyche* (III. 30):

Meantime the dove had soared above their reach,  
 But hovered still in anxious Psyche's sight,  
 . . . . .  
 Conspicuous mid the gloom its silver plumage shone.

In his *Poems* of 1817, Keats published a sonnet *How many bards gild the lapses of time!*, which Woodhouse, in his annotated copy of the *Poems*, dated March 1816.

How many bards gild the lapses of time!  
 A few of them have ever been the food  
 Of my delighted fancy, — I could brood  
 Over their beauties, earthly, or sublime:  
 And often, when I sit me down to rhyme,  
 These will in throngs before my mind intrude:  
 But no confusion, no disturbance rude  
 Do they occasion; 'tis a pleasing chime.  
 So the unnumber'd sounds that evening store;  
 The songs of birds — the whisp'ring of the leaves —  
 The voice of waters — the great bell that heaves  
 With solemn sound, — and thousand others more,  
 That distance of recognizance bereaves,  
 Make pleasing music, and not wild uproar.

Keats had the faculty of self-analysis as well as that of self-expression. In this sonnet he analyzed the two methods by which he was composing his poems — the method of imitation, which he had learned from Thomson, Gray, and other poets of the eighteenth century, and the method of originality, which he was learning from Hunt and Wordsworth. He explained the harmony with which poetic reminiscences and natural impressions fused in his mind in the process of composition.

In imaginative quality and in artistry this sonnet ranks high among the sonnets which Keats composed in this period. It has that perfect unity of intuition which is essential to the sonnet. There is a nice distinction between the octave and the sestet in the two-fold development of the theme. There is also a perfect symmetry in form between the octave and the sestet, the "pleasing music"

which closes the sestet echoing the "pleasing chime" which closes the octave and binding the two divisions into a whole.

The sonnet was highly regarded in the circle of Keats's friends. When Charles Cowden Clarke<sup>15</sup> showed a batch of Keats's poems to Leigh Hunt in October 1816, Horace Smith, who was present, read the sonnet aloud, marking the sestet "with particular emphasis and approval." He repeated the verse,

That distance of recognizance bereaves,

and exclaimed, "What a well-condensed expression for a youth so young!" Woodhouse, in his annotated copy of the *Poems* of 1817, explained the verse as "which distance of time prevents from being distinctly recognised." It is an example of a concise and abstract form of expression which was much admired in the eighteenth century. A few of the images in the sonnet — bards who gild the lapses of time and who are the food of delighted fancy — were suggested by the far-fetched images of sixteenth-century poetry. "The food of my delighted fancy" reminds us of Shakespeare's "food of sweet and bitter fancy" (*As You Like It*, IV. iii. 102).

Keats evinced his mastery of metrical technique by taking a liberty with the metre of the first verse of the sonnet,

How many bards gild the lapses of time. . . .

Poets have reacted in divers ways to the daring irregularity of this verse. Leigh Hunt,<sup>16</sup> who probably read it as a tetrameter of some kind or other, said that "by no contrivance of any sort can we prevent this from jumping out of the heroic measure into mere rhythmicallity." Miss Lowell<sup>17</sup> agreed with Hunt's censure of the verse. "Nothing can prevent the first line," she said, "from taking on a rhythm utterly unlike the traditional five-stressed iambic rhythm of the sonnet, and in any line but the first this might well have given a musical effect, but not in the first, since the first line of a short poem invariably sets the tune." Robert Bridges,<sup>18</sup> on the contrary, reading the verse as irregular iambic pentameter, regarded "the inversion of the third and fourth stresses as very musical and suitable to the exclamatory form of the sentence."

<sup>15</sup> C. C. Clarke, *Recollections of Writers*, pp. 132-133.

<sup>16</sup> Leigh Hunt's review of Keats's *Poems* of 1817, *The Examiner* for July 13, 1817.

<sup>17</sup> Amy Lowell, Vol I, p. 116.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Bridges, *John Keats, A Critical Essay*. Ernest de Sélincourt, *Poems of John Keats*, p. 397.



## 2

In February 1816 Leigh Hunt published *The Story of Rimini*, which he composed according to the formula which he had defined in the notes to *The Feast of the Poets* and in essays in *The Round Table* in *The Examiner*. *The Story of Rimini* is a short romance of chivalry, which has the following characteristics: the short narrative form of *The Fables* which Dryden had adapted from Ovid, Boccaccio, and Chaucer; the heroic couplets of Dryden and William Browne, with overflowing verses and overflowing couplets, varied medial pauses, alexandrines, triplets, and double rhymes; the conversational diction, the natural imagery, and the simple, healthy, primary affections or emotions of Wordsworth; the "poetic luxury" or sensuousness and the chivalry of Spenser; and the medley style of Pulci, Boiardo, and Ariosto, partly serious and partly lively.

*The Story of Rimini* completely established Hunt's influence upon Keats's poetic style. After Keats read *The Story of Rimini*, he was impelled to tell a tale of chivalry. This impulse he expressed in his *Specimen of an Induction to a Poem*, which he composed probably in March or April 1816.

Lo! I must tell a tale of chivalry;  
For large white plumes are dancing in mine eye . . . ,

he began. After elaborating upon the image of the "white plumes," he began for a second time:

Lo! I must tell a tale of chivalry;  
For while I muse, the lance points slantingly  
Athwart the morning air . . .

After adding that the lance is brandished by a knight and that a sweet lady, standing on the worn top of some old battlement, hails the lance as her stout defender, he began for a third time:

Yet must I tell a tale of chivalry:  
Or wherefore comes that steed so proudly by?  
Wherefore more proudly does the gentle knight,  
Rein in the swelling of his ample might?

No doubt Keats desired to tell a tale of chivalry; but, unfortunately, he had only a picture in his mind. The three images — the white plume dancing in his eye, the lance pointing slantingly athwart the morning air, and the proud knight reining in his proud steed — are Keats's impressions of Hunt's description of Prince Paulo entering Ravenna with a cavalcade of knights, the "flower of Rimini,"

All shapes of gallantry on steeds of fire.

The knights wore "caps of velvet,"

Each with a dancing feather sweeping it,  
Tumbling its white against their short dark hair . . .

At the end of the procession and as a climax, came Prince Paulo --

And on a milk-white courser, like the air,  
A glorious figure springs into the square . . .  
His haughty steed, who seems by turns to be  
Vexed and made proud by that cool mastery,  
Shakes at his bit, and rolls his eyes with care,  
Reaching with stately step at the fine air . . .  
The princely rider on his back sits still,  
And looks where'er he likes, and sways him at his will.

No story coming when he did call, Keats ended the *Induction* with an invocation to Spenser, the god of chivalry, and to Libertas or Leigh Hunt, the priest of the Spenserian cult.

Spenser! thy brows are arched, open, kind,  
And come like a clear sun-rise to my mind;  
And always does my heart with pleasure dance,  
When I think on thy noble countenance:  
Where never yet was ought more earthly seen  
Than the pure freshness of thy laurels green.  
Therefore, great bard, I not so fearfully  
Call on thy gentle spirit to hover nigh  
My daring steps: or if thy tender care,  
Thus startled unaware,  
Be jealous that the foot of other wight  
Should madly follow that bright path of light  
Trac'd by thy lov'd Libertas; he will speak,  
And tell thee that my prayer is very meek;  
That I will follow with due reverence,  
And start with awe at mine own strange pretence.  
Him thou wilt hear; so I will rest in hope  
To see wide plains, fair trees and lawny slope:  
The morn, the eve, the light, the shade, the flowers;  
Clear streams, smooth lakes, and overlooking towers.

In April or May, I believe, Keats composed *Calidore*, his second attempt to tell a tale of chivalry. He derived the suggestion for this romance from the sixth book of *The Faerie Queene*, in which Spenser related the quest of Sir Calidore, the Knight of Courtesy, to bind the Blatant Beast. Keats composed only one hundred and sixty verses of the introduction to his romance; but in characterizing Calidore as a boy he intended, I presume, to relate the adventure

by which Calidore won his knighthood. His power of description had developed beyond his power of narration. The action in *Calidore* can be summarized in a few sentences. Calidore paddled across a lake to a castle and entered the courtyard as two steeds and two palfreys came prancing in. He assisted two ladies to dismount from the palfreys and was introduced by Sir Clerimond, whom he knew, to the far-famed, the brave Sir Gondibert. The two knights, the two ladies, and Calidore entered the castle and sat in a pleasant chamber.

The chivalric sentiment of *Calidore* is sweet, luscious, sentimental, almost indelicate. When Calidore assisted the ladies to dismount from their palfreys,

What a kiss,  
 What gentle squeeze he gave each lady's hand!  
 How tremblingly their delicate ancles spann'd!  
 Into how sweet a trance his soul was gone,  
 While whisperings of affection  
 Made him delay to let their tender feet  
 Come to the earth; with an incline so sweet  
 From their low palfreys o'er his neck they bent:  
 And whether there were tears of languishment,  
 Or that the evening dew had pearl'd their tresses,  
 He feels a moisture on his cheek, and blesses  
 With lips that tremble, and with glistening eye  
 All the soft luxury  
 That nestled in his arms    A dimpled hand,  
 Fair as some wonder out of fairy land,  
 Hung from his shoulder like the drooping flowers  
 Of whitest Cassia, fresh from summer showers:  
 And this he fondled with his happy cheek  
 As if for joy he would no further seek;  
 When the kind voice of good Sir Clerimond  
 Came to his ear, like something from beyond  
 His present being: so he gently drew  
 His warm arms, thrilling now with pulses new,  
 From their sweet thrall, and forward gently bending,  
 Thank'd heaven that his joy was never ending;  
 While 'gainst his forehead he devoutly press'd  
 A hand heaven made to succour the distress'd;  
 A hand that from the world's bleak promontory  
 Had lifted Calidore for deeds of glory

Keats derived this sweet, luscious sentimentality not only from Leigh Hunt but also from Mary Tighe, Charlotte Smith, Tom Moore, Byron, and other poets of the eighteenth-century school of sensibility. From Hunt alone, however, he derived the familiarity or vulgarity. Hunt related the amorous episodes of Paulo and

Francesca in a style that is both sentimental and vulgar. Paulo, he said, would

bend down his admiring eyes  
On all her touching looks and qualities,  
Turning their shapely sweetness every way,  
Till 'twas his food and habit day by day . . .  
And did he stroll into some lonely place,  
Under the trees, upon the thick soft grass,  
How charming, would he think, to see her here!  
How heightened then, and perfect would appear  
The two divinest things this world has got,  
A lovely woman in a rural spot!

In the climax of the romance, Paulo discovered Francesca sitting in a bower and reading the romance of Lancelot of the Lake.

"May I come in?" said he: — it made her start, —  
That smiling voice; — she coloured, pressed her heart  
A moment, as for breath, and then with free  
And usual tone said, "O yes, — certainly" . . .  
With this the lovers met, with this they spoke,  
With this they sat down to the self-same book,  
And Paulo, by degrees, gently embraced  
With one permitted arm her lovely waist;  
And both their cheeks, like peaches on a tree,  
Leaned with a touch together, thrillingly;  
And o'er the book they hung, and nothing said,  
And every lingering page grew longer as they read.  
As thus they sat, and felt with leaps of heart  
Their colour change, they came upon the part  
Where fond Geneura, with her flame long nurst,  
Smiled upon Launcelot when he kissed her first:  
That touch at last, through every fibre slid;  
And Paulo turned, scarce knowing what he did,  
Only he felt he could no more dissemble,  
And kissed her, mouth to mouth, all in a tremble.  
Sad were those hearts, and sweet was that long kiss:  
Sacred be love from sight, whate'er it is.  
The world was all forgot, the struggle o'er,  
Desperate the joy. — That day they read no more.

In such passages as these Hunt sought to express the chivalric sentiment of Spenser in a familiar, natural style. He regarded Spenser as his master in that sentimental sensuousness which he called indifferently "sentiment" and "luxury." He appreciated the sensuous, pictorial, and emotional qualities of Spenser; but, lacking Spenser's intensity and nobility, he converted the vivid, noble sentiment of Spenser into a sweet sentimentality. In his sonnet *The Poets*, which he published in *The Examiner* for December 1, 1815,

he praised Spenser for "luxury and sweet sylvan play." In his article *On Chaucer* in *The Examiner* for October 1, 1815 he said that the poet who should undertake to complete the *Squire's Tale* should have "a great portion of the abstract poetical luxury of Spenser." He employed "luxuries" and "wonders" to designate objects, usually natural objects, which stimulate the mood of luxury or sentimental sensuousness. In *The Story of Rimini*, he described the "low talking leaves," the "cool light the vines let in," the "hushing sight of closing wood," the "distant splash of waters," the "smell of citron blooms," and "fifty luxuries more."

Keats not only imitated Hunt's sentiment or luxury but also employed Hunt's terminology. In *Calidore* he described the "soft luxury that nestled in his arms"; in *Sleep and Poetry*, he had a "store of luxuries"; and in *I stood tip-toe upon a little hill*, he plucked a "posey of luxuries," such as a "bush of May flowers," a "lush laburnum," a "filbert hedge," etc.

Vulgar familiarity manifests itself in diction, but it springs, as de Sélincourt observed, from vulgar states of feeling. In the preface to *The Story of Rimini*, Hunt, adapting Wordsworth's theory of diction, said that he had endeavored to compose his romance in "a free and idiomatic cast of language"; that "the proper language of poetry is in fact nothing different from that of real life"; and that a poet should "use as much as possible an actual existing language,—omitting of course mere vulgarisms and fugitive phrases." He applied this theory of natural diction with poor taste and did not avoid, as he asserted, "mere vulgarisms and fugitive phrases."

The reviewer in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* unmercifully ridiculed Hunt's idiomatic diction. "We are indeed altogether incapable," he protested, "of understanding many parts of his description, for a good glossary of the Cockney dialect is yet a desideratum in English literature . . ." Many of the words and phrases in *The Story of Rimini* are low, colloquial, and vulgar, such as "stout notions on the marrying score," "taste for rural sights," "with freaks and snatches," "got in clumps," "the start and snatch," "kept no reckoning with his sweets and sour," "wanting on the generous score," "dreadful freaks," "looks awfully," and "sprightly prance." Many of the words and phrases to which the reviewer objected, however, were archaic and unusual instead of cockney—"swirl," "swaling," "quoit-like," "sidling," "cored," and "boy-storied trees."

The chief characteristic of Hunt's diction, which was also its chief vice, was his license in the coinage and usage of words. He em-

ployed one part of speech for another and coined one part of speech from another, as, for example, "with gentle *creep*," a verb used as a noun; "*scattery* light" and "*glary* yellow," adjectives coined from verbs; "*bowering* arch," a verbal adjective coined from a noun, etc. Following the practice of the Elizabethan poets and their eighteenth-century imitators, he coined vivid and unusual compounds — bright-eyed, clear-shewn, tear-dipped, blush-hiding, soft-lighting, heart-bare, golden-fretted, path-deep, many-windowed, boy-storied, story-painted, and passion-plighted. He coined unusual adjectives by adding the suffix "-some" to adjectives, nouns, and verbs — darksome, lightsome, pranksome, and clipsome. He employed an abundance of adjectives in "-y," many of which were improperly formed — balmy, leafy, glary, grovelly, plashy, streaky, lordly, pillowy. He used an abundance of abstract nouns of various, sometimes improper, formations — wonderment, leafyship, luxuries, perplexities, niceties, varieties, clearness, briskness, gladness, richness, freshness, jauntiness, sweetness, etc. In descriptions of natural scenes, these abstract nouns produce moods of sentimental sensuousness instead of distinct pictures. He employed an abundance of polysyllabic adverbs — lightsomely, refreshfully, sleekly, placidly, etc. He used improper and unusual adverbial comparatives — backwarder, finelier, livelier, martialler, franklier, tastefuller, and loudlier. He used many adverbs formed from present participles — creepingly, smilingly, crushingly, and preparingly. He employed an abundance of present participles as participles, adjectives, and nouns to produce lively rhythm and to suggest active movement. His employment of participial adjectives of intense action is particularly characteristic — *hasting* pomp, *expecting* court, *hushing* paths, *hiding* tears, *quicken*ing hum, and *firm*ing foot. He used many participial nouns in the plural — snortings, smearings, measurings, sufferings, meetings, and bearings. He joined separable particles to the verb — up-shooting, and up-screaming. He employed favorite words again and again — start, dart, heave, clear, bright, fresh, jaunty, sprightly, dance, prance, leap, cordial, sparkling, delicious, placid, bland, gentle, tender, sweet, leafy, flowery, bowery, grassy, mellowy, etc.

Keats followed closely Hunt's usage of words. Through *Calidore*, the *Epistle to my Brother George*, the *Epistle to Charles Cowden Clarke*, *Sleep and Poetry*, and *I stood tip-toe upon a little hill*, we can trace the rapid progress of his adoption of Hunt's diction. We must remember, however, that he read with Clarke first and with Hunt afterwards the poets from whom Hunt drew much of his diction —

Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Chapman, Drayton, Fletcher, William Browne, Thomson, Mary Tighe, Wordsworth, etc

In the *Induction* and in *Calidore*, Keats employed many of Hunt's favorite words — stare, start, leap, dance, prance, eager, nimble, meek, placid, sweet, delicious, elegant, gentle, delicate, wonder, luxury, etc. He used verbs as nouns — “with easy *float*,” “with hasty *trip*,” and “in free and airy *feel*.” He employed an abundance of abstract nouns in “-ness” — clearness, calmness, dimness, leafiness, mossiness, freshness. He used an abundance of present participles — dancing, trembling, ballancing, thrilling, bedewing, etc.; adverbs formed from present participles — slantingly, lingeringly, refreshingly, invitingly, staringly, and tremblingly; and plural nouns formed from present participles — windings, dartings, and whisperings. He joined separable particles to the verb — outpourings and upholding. He used an abundance of adjectives in “-y” — easy, shadowy, leafy, bowery, silverly, etc. He used also unusual abstract nouns such as languishment, revelries, and canopies, and compounds such as bright-eyed, large-eyed, and sweet-lipp'd.

Keats was directly indebted to Hunt for colloquial phrases and images. The image in *Calidore*,

Scarce can his clear and nimble eye-sight follow  
The freaks and dartings of the black-wing'd swallow,

was derived from *The Story of Rimini*,

The *birds* to the delicious time are singing,  
*Darting* with *freaks* and snatches up and down . . .

The image in *Calidore*,

the warder's ken  
Had found white coursers prancing in the glen,

was drawn from *The Story of Rimini*. In the procession that entered Ravenna, there was a “troop of *steeds*, *milk-white* and unattired”; the pages rode by “with many a *sprightly prance*”; and Prince Paulo swept by “on a *milk-white courser* like the air.” Still another image in *Calidore*,

There stood a knight, patting the flowing hair  
Of his proud horse's mane . . .

was derived from *The Story of Rimini*,

The *patting hand* that best persuades the check  
And makes up the quarrel with the *proud neck* . . .

The "staring" and "starting" in *Calidore*,

That at each other look'd half staringly;  
And then their features started into smiles,

were probably suggested by *The Story of Rimini*,

woke her with a start  
And looking up again, half sigh, half stare . . .

The metre of *Calidore* is an exaggerated imitation of the metre of *The Story of Rimini*. There are varied medial pauses, overflowing verses, and overflowing couplets. There are fifteen double rhymes, such as follow/swallow and viewing/bedewing, and eleven rhymes in which the final syllable of a polysyllable is rhymed with a monosyllable, as lingeringly/sky and portcullis/kiss. There are three triplets, — dew/grew/view, doors/floors/corridors, and be/tree/Mercury. The lively, flowing effect of the verse was increased by the use of an abundance of present participles, adjectives in "-y," polysyllabic adverbs, and other types of words which I have already analyzed. The occasional use of verses of three beats in the pattern of verses of five beats was suggested, Sir Sidney Colvin observed,<sup>19</sup> by Milton's *Lycidas* and Spenser's *Epithalamion* and *Prothalamion*.

Three sonnets on the subject of woman, which were published without date in the *Poems* of 1817, were composed probably in March or April 1816. They reveal the immediate and harmful effect which *The Story of Rimini* had upon Keats's poetry. In the valentine to Mary Frogley and in the sonnet *Had I a man's fair form*, which were composed in February, there is the chivalric sentiment of Spenser and the seventeenth-century Spenserians. In the *Induction*, *Calidore*, and the three sonnets on woman, there is Hunt's vulgar and sentimental adaptation of Spenser's chivalric sentiment. In the first sonnet, Keats expressed in his own person the "ambitious heat of the aspiring boy," *Calidore*.

Woman! when I behold thee flippant, vain,  
Inconstant, childish, proud, and full of fancies;  
Without that modest softening that enhances  
The downcast eye, repentant of the pain  
That its mild light creates to heal again:  
E'en then, elate, my spirit leaps, and prances,  
E'en then my soul with exultation dances  
For that to love, so long, I've dormant lain:  
But when I see thee meek, and kind, and tender,  
Heavens! how desperately do I adore

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<sup>19</sup> Sir Sidney Colvin, p. 122.



Thy winning graces; — to be thy defender  
 I hotly burn — to be a Calidore —  
 A very Red Cross Knight — a stout Leander —  
 Might I be loved by thee like these of yore.

In this sonnet, I believe, Keats contrasted the women whom he knew in life with the women about whom he read in romances. When he beheld flippant, vain, inconstant, childish, proud, and fanciful women, such as those whom he knew in the coterie of the Mathews, he was glad that he had been dormant to love; but when he beheld meek, kind, and tender women, such as Francesca in *The Story of Rimini*, he hotly burned to be their defender, a Calidore, a Redcross Knight, a stout Leander.

The diction and imagery of these sonnets, as well as the sentiment, prove conclusively that the sonnets were composed in the same period in which the *Induction* and *Calidore* were composed. The allusion to Calidore in the first sonnet connects the sonnet with the romance. The verses,

E'en then, elate, my *spirit leaps*, and *prances*,  
 E'en then my *soul with exultation dances*,

are similar to two verses in the *Induction*,

And always does my *heart with pleasure dance*,  
 When I think on thy noble countenance . . .

We may compare also two other verses in the *Induction*,

Or when *his spirit*, with more calm intent,  
*Leaps* to the honors of a tournament,

and two verses in *Calidore*,

Anon *he leaps* along the oaken floors  
 Of halls and corridors,

and two other verses in *Calidore*,

the warder's ken  
 Had found white *coursers prancing* in the glen . . .

The images, the soul dancing with exultation and the heart dancing with pleasure, were derived from Wordsworth's *Daffodils*,

And then my heart with pleasure fills  
 And dances with the daffodils . . .

Keats drenched Wordsworth's image in the sentiment and stated it in the diction of Leigh Hunt. The "leaping" and "prancing," which Keats used with ludicrous effect in the poems of this period,

came directly from *The Story of Rimini*. Hunt's image of white steeds prancing into Ravenna exercised a fatal fascination upon Keats's imagination. "Prancing" can be taken as a test-word in the dating of Keats's poems. It does not occur in any poem which he composed before the publication of *The Story of Rimini*, and it occurs in most of the poems which he composed after he had read and assimilated Hunt's romance. It occurs, for instance, in *Calidore* (v. 57), the *Epistle to my Brother George* (v. 25), the *Epistle to Charles Cowden Clarke* (v. 46), and *Sleep and Poetry* (v. 332).

The metre of the three sonnets on woman, furthermore, proves that they were composed after Keats had adopted Hunt's new style of versification. In his early sonnets there are no double rhymes, but in these sonnets there are several — fancies/enhances/prances/dances, tender/defender/Leander, and being/all-seeing/agreeing/freeing. The verses of these sonnets have in general the loose, flowing form of the heroic couplets of *Calidore*.

In the summer of 1816 Keats sought relief from the drudgery of his studies in the hospitals by taking walks into the country around London. In a compact group of three sonnets he expressed the natural impressions which he received, the books which he read, and the emotions which he felt on these excursions. Keats published the first sonnet, *To one who has been long in city pent*, in his *Poems* of 1817. Tom Keats and George Keats transcribed it into their Copy-books. George Keats's transcript, which differs considerably from the published version, represents, it is probable, the first version. George Keats said, in a subscript, that the sonnet was "Written in the Fields — June 1816." I quote George Keats's transcript as reported by H. B. Forman.<sup>20</sup>

To one who has been long in city pent,  
 'Tis very sweet to look upon the fair  
 And open face of heaven, — to breathe a prayer  
 Full in the smile of the bright firmament.  
 Who is more happy, when, with heart's content,  
 Fatigued he sinks upon a pleasant lair  
 Of wavy grass, and reads some debonair  
 And gentle tale of love and languishment?  
 Returning, thoughtful, homeward, with an ear  
 Catching the notes of Philomel, — an eye  
 Following the wafted Cloudlet's light career;  
 He mourns that day so soon has glided by:  
 E'en like the passage of an angel's tear  
 That droppeth through the Aether silently.

<sup>20</sup> H. B. Forman, *Variorum Edition*, Vol. I, p. 45.

The "debonair And gentle tale of love and languishment," which Keats read in a "pleasant lair Of wavy grass," is an apt characterization of Hunt's *Story of Rimini*. Keats struck in this sonnet the characteristic note of the sonnets which he composed under Hunt's influence in 1816 and the early part of 1817.

The second sonnet, *To a Friend who sent me some Roses*, was published in the *Poems* of 1817. The autograph manuscript in the Pierpont Morgan Library, which has no title, signature, or date, differs only slightly from the published version. The transcript in Tom Keats's Copy-book is entitled "To Charles Wells on receiving a bunch of roses" and dated "June 29, 1816." Keats contrasted the garden roses which Charles Wells sent him with the wild-musk rose which he saw

As late I rambled in the happy fields,  
What time the sky-lark shakes the tremulous dew  
From his lush clover covert . . .

Harry Buxton Forman<sup>21</sup> said that Richard Henry Horne, who had been a student with Tom Keats and Charles Wells in the Clarke School, told him that there had been an unpleasantness between Keats and Wells and that the roses which Wells sent to Keats were a peace offering.

The third sonnet, *Oh! how I love, on a fair Summer's eve*, was preserved by Woodhouse in three transcripts — one of which is in his Scrap-book, the second in his Commonplace Book, and the third in his Book of Transcripts. In a subscript to the transcript in the Scrap-book, Woodhouse said in shorthand that he obtained the sonnet "from Mary Frogley." Lord Houghton, who published the sonnet in 1848, printed it, I presume, from the transcript in Woodhouse's Book of Transcripts. He improved the text by correcting the punctuation, altering "thought" into "thoughts" in verse 5, and omitting a redundant "the" in verse 12. I quote the transcript in Woodhouse's Scrap-book.

#### SONNET.

Oh! how I love, on a fair Summer's eve,  
When streams of light pour down the golden west;  
And, on the balmy Zephyrs, tranquil rest  
The silver clouds; far, far away to leave  
All meaner thought, and take a sweet reprieve  
From little cares; to find, with easy quest,  
A fragment wild, with Nature's beauty drest,  
And there into delight my soul deceive;

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

There warm my breast with patriotic lore,  
 Musing on Milton's fate, on Sydney's bier,  
 'Till their stern forms before my mind arise,  
 Perhaps on the wing of Poesy upsoar,  
 Full often dropping a delicious tear  
 When some melodious sorrow spells mine eyes.

1816

From Mary Frogley [in shorthand].

Keats composed this sonnet in July, I believe, during a "sweet reprieve" from the exhausting preparation for his examination as an apothecary which occurred on July 25. He repeated, in much less imaginative style, the theme of the sonnet *To one who has been long in city pent*. The melodious sorrow which spelled his eye, I presume, is another allusion to Hunt's *Story of Rimini*.

Keats was reading Shakespeare and Milton as well as Wordsworth and Hunt in the summer of 1816. In the second of these sonnets there is an allusion to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (the wand that Queen Titania wields), and the phrase, "What time the skylark," was suggested probably by a phrase in *Lycidas*, "What time the gadfly." The first verse of the first sonnet, "To one who has been long in city pent," was a reminiscence of a verse in *Paradise Lost* (IX. 445), "As one who long in populous city pent." And in the third sonnet there is an allusion to Milton's fate.

On one of his walks into the country in the summer of 1816, Keats had the experience which he expressed in *I stood tip-toe upon a little hill*. In 1828 Leigh Hunt said that this poem "was suggested" to Keats "by a delightful summer day, as he stood beside the gate that leads from the Battery on Hampstead Heath into a field by Caen Wood." This statement has been regarded as proof that the friendship between Keats and Hunt began as early as May or June of 1816. It is to be noted, however, that Hunt did not say either that he was present with Keats on that occasion or that they were friends at that time. Evidence which I shall present later proves conclusively that Keats was introduced to Hunt by Charles Cowden Clarke in the latter part of October 1816. Keats composed very little, if any, of *I stood tip-toe upon a little hill* in the summer, for he did not complete it before the end of December 1816.

## 3

On July 25, 1816 Keats appeared before the Court of Examiners of the Society of Apothecaries, passed the examination, and received a certificate to practice as an apothecary in the country.

Some time before he went up for the examination, Charles Cowden Clarke,<sup>22</sup> observing that his mind was entirely absorbed in poetry, asked him what progress he was making in his study of surgery. He replied that he could not sympathize with surgery as a main pursuit in life and confessed that he was not fitted by temperament for its mastery. "The other day, for instance, during the lecture," he said, "there came a sunbeam into the room, and with it a whole troop of creatures floating in the ray; and I was off with them to Oberon and fairyland." "And yet," Clarke observed, "with all his self-styled unfitness for the pursuit, I was afterwards informed that at his subsequent examination he displayed an amount of acquirement which surprised his fellow students, who had scarcely any other association with him than that of a cheerful, crochety rhymester."

After he had passed his examination on July 25, Keats departed immediately for the seashore at Margate to decide whether he should abandon the profession of surgery and take up that of poetry. Before making this decision, he desired to absorb natural impressions, to meditate upon the source and function of poetry, and to test the strength of his poetic genius.

In his *Poems* of 1817 Keats published three poems which he composed in Margate, the *Epistle to my Brother George*, which he dated August 1816, the *Epistle to Charles Cowden Clarke*, which he dated September 1816, and the sonnet *To my Brother George*, which he printed without date. The autograph manuscript of the *Epistle to my Brother George* is now in the Harvard College Library. George Keats transcribed the sonnet and the epistle, addressed to himself, into his Scrap-book and subscribed each of them "Margate, August, 1816." Tom Keats also transcribed the sonnet in his Copy-book. Harry Buxton Forman examined a few leaves, torn from a small oblong note-book and preserved by Joseph Severn, on which Keats wrote the first draft of the sonnet *To my Brother George* and the first draft of two quatrains of the sonnet *To my Brothers*. The first draft of the sonnet, which differs in several verses from the published version, offers an interesting study in composition and revision.

In the *Epistle to my Brother George* Keats considered the problem of adopting poetry as his profession in life. In the opening verses he repeated the theme of his *Epistle to George Felton Mathew*, which he had composed in November 1815. He recalled the dreary hours he had passed in London in the study of surgery, his "brain bewilder'd" and his "mind o'ercast with heaviness." In such hours he had thought that he would never catch "sphery strains" from

<sup>22</sup> C. C. Clarke, *Recollection of Writers*, pp. 131-132

nature, that he would never compose a "rural song," that he would never unfold "some tale of love and arms in time of old." He had now, however, escaped from London and surgery to Margate and nature.

But there are times, when those that love the bay,  
 Fly from all sorrowing far, far away;  
 A sudden glow comes on them, nought they see  
 In water, earth, or air, but poesy  
 It has been said, dear George, and true I hold it,  
 (For knightly Spenser to Libertas told it,)  
 That when a Poet is in such a trance,  
 In air he sees white coursers paw, and prance,  
 Bestriden of gay knights, in gay apparel,  
 Who at each other tilt in playful quarrel,  
 And what we, ignorantly, sheet-lightning call,  
 Is the swift opening of their wide portal,  
 When the bright warder blows his trumpet clear,  
 Whose tones reach nought on earth but Poet's ear.  
 When these enchanted portals open wide,  
 And through the light the horsemen swiftly glide,  
 The Poet's eye can reach those golden halls,  
 And view the glory of their festivals  
 These wonders strange he sees, and many more,  
 Whose head is pregnant with poetic lore.  
 Should he upon an evening ramble fare  
 With forehead to the soothing breezes bare,  
 Would he naught see but the dark, silent blue  
 With all its diamonds trembling through and through?  
 Or the coy moon, when in the waviness  
 Of whitest clouds she does her beauty dress,  
 And staidly paces higher up, and higher,  
 Like a sweet nun in holy-day attire?  
 Ah, yes! much more would start into his sight —  
 The revelries, and mysteries of night:  
 And should I ever see them, I will tell you  
 Such tales as needs must with amazement spell you.

Keats's allusion to Libertas or Leigh Hunt does not prove, as some critics have inferred, that the two poets were personally acquainted. It no more proves that Keats had met Hunt than that Hunt had met Spenser.

In this theory of poetic inspiration, Keats expressed Hunt's fusion of the naturalism of Wordsworth with the romance of Spenser and the fairyland of Shakespeare. When a poet's imagination is stimulated by natural impressions, Keats said, he not only sees natural objects in a heightened degree of beauty but also sees, if his "mind is pregnant with poetic lore," the mysteries of nature, the revelries

of the fairies, white coursers pawing and prancing in the air, and gay knights tilting in playful quarrel. With his characteristic faculty of self-analysis, Keats knew that the "wonders" which a poet sees in a state of inspiration must be called up from his memory, the depository of his experience.

The poet receives pleasure from the "wonders" which he sees in a state of inspiration, Keats continued, and, by expressing these wonders in poetic form, gives pleasure to posterity. Adapting a famous phrase of Thomson's *Winter*, Keats represented the dying poet as saying:

What though I leave this dull, and earthly mould,  
Yet shall my spirit lofty converse hold  
With after times . . .

Patriots will thunder out his numbers in the senate, he exulted; sages will mingle his sententious thoughts with moral themes; maids will sing his lays on their bridal nights; the May Queen will read his tales to the villagers gathered around her; and mothers will lull their babes to sleep with his songs.

Keats could not forego the pleasures of a poet. He must be a poet, he decided, although as a surgeon, he admitted, he might be happier and dearer to society.

Ah, my dear friend and brother,  
Could I, at once, my mad ambition smother,  
For tasting joys like these, sure I should be  
Happier, and dearer to society.

In the poems which he composed in Margate Keats experimented with two styles of description — the natural style which he had learned from Hunt and Wordsworth and the artificial style which he had learned from Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton and their eighteenth-century imitators. In the *Epistle to my Brother George* he described the particular scene at Margate in which he wrote it.

Of late, too, I have had much calm enjoyment,  
Stretch'd on the grass at my best lov'd employment  
Of scribbling lines for you. These things I thought  
While, in my face, the freshest breeze I caught.  
E'en now I'm pillow'd on a bed of flowers  
That crowns a lofty clift, which proudly towers  
Above the ocean-waves. The stalks, and blades,  
Chequer my tablet with their quivering shades.  
On one side is a field of drooping oats,  
Through which the poppies show their scarlet coats;  
So pert and useless, that they bring to mind  
The scarlet coats that pester human-kind.

And on the other side, outspread, is seen,  
 Ocean's blue mantle streak'd with purple, and green  
 Now 'tis I see a canvass'd ship, and now  
 Mark the bright silver curling round her prow  
 I see the lark down-dropping to his nest,  
 And the broad winged sea-gull never at rest;  
 For when no more he spreads his feathers free,  
 His breast is dancing on the restless sea.  
 Now I direct my eyes into the west,  
 Which at this moment is in sunbeams drest:  
 Why westward turn? 'Twas but to say adieu!  
 'Twas but to kiss my hand, dear George, to you!

Keats described this scene from direct observation. He presented the natural objects in the order in which they met his eyes as he looked up from his tablet. There are no interpretations of images, no mythological symbols of natural forces and phenomena, no allusions to poetry, no artificial diction. Certain images belong to poetic tradition, but they are simple and natural. The "chequering" of his tablet with quivering shades goes back through Hunt and Thomson to Milton; and the "lofty clift, which proudly towers Above the ocean-waves" reminds me of the cliff in *King Lear*, the "cliff, whose high and bending head Looks fearfully in the confined deep."

This setting, which Keats described in the style of Leigh Hunt, was influenced, I believe, by the setting in Hunt's epistle *To Thomas Moore*, which was published in *The Examiner* for June 30, 1816, a month and a half before Keats composed his epistle.

E'en now while I write, I'm half stretched on the ground  
 With a cheek-smoothing air coming taking me round,  
 Betwixt hillocks of green, plumed with fern and wild flowers,  
 While my eye closely follows the bees in their bowers.

In the sonnet *To my Brother George*, Keats described the same scene which he described in the epistle.

✓✓ TO MY BROTHER GEORGE.

✓ Many the wonders I this day have seen:  
 The sun, when first he kist away the tears  
 That fill'd the eyes of morn; — the laurel'd peers  
 Who from the feathery gold of evening lean; —  
 The ocean with its vastness, its blue green,  
 Its ships, its rocks, its caves, its hopes, its fears, —  
 Its voice mysterious, which whoso hears  
 Must think on what will be, and what has been.  
 E'en now, dear George, while this for you I write,  
 Cynthia is from her silken curtains peeping



So scantily, that it seems her bridal night,  
 And she her half-discover'd revels keeping.  
 But what, without the social thought of thee,  
 Would be the wonders of the sky and sea?

The thought and the feeling of the sonnet indicate that Keats composed it within a few days after he had arrived in Margate. He had seen many "wonders" in this new and strange environment, and his brain was teeming with impressions which he desired to share with his brother, who was remaining in London. The sonnet glows with the wonder of natural beauty which was perceived directly and felt vividly; but, unlike the description in the epistle, which was composed from direct observation in the afternoon, it was composed in recollection in the evening; and his mind, which was pregnant with poetic lore, enriched his experience of natural beauty with fancies, feelings, reflections, and reminiscences. The style of description in the sonnet, therefore, is quite different from that in the epistle. To use Hazlitt's distinction, the scene in the sonnet was described less from the eye and more from the mind than the scene in the epistle.

The sun, which was merely a phenomenon of light in the epistle, became the sun-god Apollo, who "kist away the tears That fill'd the eyes of morn." The "sunbeams" in which the west was "drest" became the "laurel'd peers Who from the feathery gold of evening lean"—that is, the poets who dwell with Apollo in Elysium and accompany him in his diurnal progress across the sky.

Ocean's blue mantle streak'd with purple, and green  
 became

The ocean with its vastness, its blue green,  
 Its ships, its rocks, its caves, its hopes, its fears, —  
 Its voice mysterious, which whoso hears  
 Must think on what will be, and what has been.

The moon, which had not appeared in the afternoon in which the epistle was composed, was described in the sonnet as "Cynthia . . . from her silken curtains peeping," a mythological symbol which might have been imagined by Spenser or Shakespeare; the allusion to her "bridal night" is a reminiscence of the classical story of Endymion and Phoebe; and her "revels" was suggested by *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The sonnet on the whole is a fine example of the suggestive, erudite, artificial style of Renaissance poetry.

In the *Epistle to Charles Cowden Clarke*, which he composed in Margate in September, Keats surveyed, as we have already seen, the steps in his poetic evolution which had led up to his decision to make poetry his profession in life. He acknowledged that Clarke

had introduced him to poetry, awakened his poetic genius, and taught him the art of poetry. He described the poems which he had read with Clarke and defined the genres of the poems which he had composed in Edmonton. The epistle to Clarke is important also as the initial step upon which Keats mounted into the literary society of London. He desired to meet Leigh Hunt, whose poetic style he had accepted and imitated; and, instinctively and subtly, he appealed to Clarke, who was a member of Hunt's coterie, to introduce him to Hunt. He expressed a friendly envy of Clarke as

One, who, of late, had ta'en sweet forest walks  
With him who elegantly chats, and talks —  
The wrong'd Libertas, — who has told you stories  
Of laurel chaplets, and Apollo's glories;  
Of troops chivalrous prancing through a city,  
And tearful ladies made for love, and pity:  
With many else which I have never known.

This is an exceedingly apt characterization of Hunt. Keats wrote it as a tribute to Hunt, but to us it seems like satire.

In the epistles *To my Brother George* and *To Charles Cowden Clarke* Keats showed a rapid progress in his imitation of Hunt's style. He employed a greater number of Hunt's characteristic words than he had done in the *Induction* and *Calidore*. The structure of his heroic couplets was becoming more flexible but more spineless. In the one hundred and forty-two verses of the *Epistle to my Brother George* there are seventeen double rhymes, many of them composed of present participles and adverbs, as slanting/enchanting, supinely/divinely, and some of them composed of two words, as heed them/read them. In the one hundred and thirty-two verses of the *Epistle to Charles Cowden Clarke* there are twenty-one double rhymes and two triplets, brook/nook/book and light/night/white.

Keats returned to London some time in the latter part of September and took lodgings with his brother Tom in the Poultry. He resumed his attendance at the hospitals; for he did not dare announce to his guardian that he intended to give up the profession of surgery until he came of age on October 29, 1816. As soon as he arrived in London he began an association with Clarke that was as intimate and as productive as their earlier association in Enfield and Edmonton.

The sonnet *On first looking into Chapman's Homer* was the first fruit of Keats's association with Clarke in London in the autumn of 1816. Keats composed this sonnet in October 1816; for Leigh Hunt, who printed it in full in *The Examiner* for December 1, 1816,

dated and signed it "Octr. 1816, John Keats." Hunt copied the date together with the text and the signature, I presume, from the manuscripts of Keats's poems which he said were given to him "the other day" and which we know were given to him by Clarke. In his story of the inspiration of the sonnet Clarke implied that it was composed in the fall of 1815; but, since he wrote his *Recollections of Keats* thirty years after this period, the contemporary dating in *The Examiner* must be accepted. Clarke's error in chronology, however, should not cast doubt upon his vivid story of the inspiration and composition of the sonnet; for his memory was tenacious of appearances, emotions, and incidents which impressed him.

On a memorable night in October 1816 Keats and Clarke foregathered in Clarke's lodgings in Clerkenwell and read portions of Chapman's *Homer* in a copy of the folio edition which Thomas Alsager, a contributor to *The Times* and a friend of Leigh Hunt's, had lent to Clarke. They turned at once, Clarke said, to the most famous passages, which they had previously known only in Pope's translation — the conversation of Helen with the old senators on the Walls of Troy, Antenor's portrait of Ulysses as an orator, the description of the shield and helmet of Diomed, the description of Neptune's passage to the Argive ships, and the story of the shipwreck of Ulysses.

Chapman supplied us with many an after-treat [Clarke said]; but it was in the teeming wonderment of this his first introduction, that, when I came down to breakfast the next morning, I found upon my table a letter with no other enclosure than his famous sonnet, "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer." We had parted, as I have already said, at day-spring, yet he contrived that I should receive the poem from a distance of, may be, two miles by ten o'clock.

The earliest autograph of this sonnet is in the Lowell Collection in the Harvard College Library. I quote the version of this autograph from the photograph which Miss Lowell printed in her biography of Keats:

On the first looking into Chapman's Homer  
 Much have I travell'd in the Realms of Gold,  
 And many goodly States, and Kingdoms seen;  
 Round many western islands have I been,  
 Which Bards in fealty to Apollo hold.  
 Oft of one wide expanse had I been told,  
     deep  
 Which ~~low~~ brow'd Homer ruled as his Demesne:  
 Yet could I never judge what Men could mean,  
 Till I heard Chapman speak out loud, and bold.

Then felt I like some Watcher of the Skies  
 When a new Planet swims into his Ken,  
 Or like stout Cortez, when with wond'ring eyes  
 He star'd at the Pacific, and all his Men  
 Look'd at each other with a wild surmise  
 Silent upon a Peak in Darien —

Miss Lowell said that the marginal lines by which Keats bracketed the rhymes prove that this was the first draft of the sonnet. It is either the first or the second draft, I believe, but it is more probably the second. In the "original" draft which Keats sent to Clarke, the seventh verse, Clarke said, was written —

Yet could I never tell what men could mean.

The autograph which I quoted above, like three later versions, has "judge" instead of "tell" in the seventh verse.

Besides this autograph, there are four other versions of the sonnet: the autograph which Keats gave to Reynolds and which is now in the Pierpont Morgan Library; the version which Tom Keats transcribed into his Copy-book; that which Hunt printed in *The Examiner* for December 1, 1816; and that which Keats printed in his *Poems* of 1817.

The sonnet *On first looking into Chapman's Homer* is a vivid expression of the emotions of literary discovery. It is a masterpiece of poetic symbolism, the expression of sensuous, emotional, and intellectual experience through imaginative symbols. The creative impulse of the sonnet sprang out of the emotions of wonder and delight with which Keats "heard Chapman speak out loud and bold" in his translation of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. In the midst of this inspiring but disturbing experience, Keats was impelled to seek relief, through synthesis and expression, from the chaotic welter of emotions which agitated him. He composed the sonnet in the very midst of the emotional experience which it expresses. He left Clarke's lodgings in Clerkenwell at daybreak, walked to his own lodgings in the Poultry, composed the sonnet, and dispatched a copy to Clarke by ten o'clock — all within a period of four hours. The materials out of which he constructed the poetic symbols through which he expressed this emotional experience, however, had germinated in his memory for years. An analysis of these materials will enable us to reproduce exactly the intuition which Keats formed, and will disclose to our imaginations avenues of suggestion of which without it we should be oblivious.

The octave of the sonnet is a single metaphor. I quote the version which Keats printed in his *Poems* of 1817.

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,  
 And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;  
 Round many western islands have I been  
 Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold  
 Oft of one wide expanse had I been told  
 That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;  
 Yet did I never breathe its pure serene  
 Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:

Keats formed the metaphor of the "realms of gold" out of two diverse sources — Robertson's *History of America*, which he had read in the Clarke School in Enfield, and the mythological story of the Elysium of poets, which he had read in English poetry of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Robertson described the "western islands," or West Indies, which Columbus discovered. He said that a greed to discover gold was the motive of every discovery which the Spaniards made in America. He said that Balboa was induced to cross the Isthmus of Darien and discover the Pacific Ocean by stories which the Indians told him of Peru, a vast and opulent country, in which gold was so common that the meanest utensils were made of it. And he described Peru, which Pizarro discovered and conquered, as a veritable realm of gold. In the *Ode to Apollo*, which he composed in February 1815, Keats described an Elysium of poets, ruled by Apollo, in which Homer, Virgil, Milton, Shakespeare, Spenser, and Tasso seize their lyres and strike chords the tones of which characterize their poetry.

In thy western halls of gold  
 When thou sittest in thy state,  
 Bards, that erst sublimely told  
 Heroic deeds, and sang of fate,  
 With fervour seize their adamantyne lyres,  
 Whose chords are solid rays, and twinkle radiant fires.

And in the sonnet *To my Brother George*, which he had recently composed in Margate, he introduced the poets of Elysium,

the laurel'd peers  
 Who from the feathery gold of evening lean . . .

Out of these two sources — the realms of gold which the Spaniards discovered in America and the heroic poets whom Apollo ruled in the halls of gold in Elysium — Keats molded the metaphor of the "realms of gold. . . Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold."

A comparison of the *Ode to Apollo* with the sonnet *On first looking into Chapman's Homer* reveals the essential source of great poetry. For the composition of a great poem, a poet must not only have a knowledge of facts and words and the faculties of imagination and judgment but must also have a stirring creative impulse. In the sonnet Keats poured into the empty symbols and sonorous phrases out of which he had composed the ode the pulsing life of an inspiring emotional experience. Elevating emotions, as Longinus said, produce elevated style.

The successive revisions of the octave of the sonnet proves Dryden's observation that the difficulty of rhyming often helps a poet to a new thought. In the version which Keats gave to Clarke, he wrote the seventh verse as follows:

Yet could I never tell what men could mean . . .

Dissatisfied with the frequency of the "e" sounds, as Miss Lowell suggested, he substituted "judge" for "tell":

Yet could I never judge what men could mean —

Keats told Clarke that the verse in its first form was "bald, and too simply wondering," a criticism which applies to the second form of the verse as well as to the first. Hunt observed in his article *Young Poets* in *The Examiner* for December 1, 1816 that the sonnet contained "one incorrect rhyme," the identical rhyme of "mean" and "demesne." Keats, seeking a correct rhyme, altered the thought of the verse:

Yet did I never breathe its pure serene . . .

The phrase "pure serene" is striking and felicitous in its context. To one who is not versed in the diction of eighteenth-century poetry it may seem unusual and original. It has been suggested that Keats derived the phrase from Cary's translation of Dante's *Paradiso*; but it is unlikely that he had read Cary's *Dante* at this time. The type of phrase to which "pure serene" belongs is common in eighteenth-century poetry. In Thomson's *Seasons*, to which Keats was deeply indebted, we find "blue serene" and "pure cerulean," and in his *To the Memory of Lord Talbot* we find "pure serene."

The sestet of the sonnet consists in two similes. In the first Keats said:

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken . . .

Did Keats employ "planet" in a precise sense or in the vague sense of celestial phenomenon? If we can discover that he had in his mind the actual discovery of one of the major planets, our intuition of the simile will be more definite, more concrete, and, therefore, more imaginative. In the midsummer of 1811, just before he left the Clarke School, Keats was awarded a copy of Bonnycastle's *Introduction to Astronomy* as a prize for voluntary translation of Latin and French. This book, which was published in 1786, is one of the earliest and best of that long series of popularizations of science which threatens to stretch out to the crack of doom. Bonnycastle illustrated astronomical principles and phenomena by copious quotations of poetry of all ages. In his preface he confessed that he had "sometimes expatiated on subjects with a warmth of expression, which may seem too florid for a philosophical performance." In the last chapter of his treatise he related with conscious effect Herschel's discovery of the planet Georgium Sidus or Uranus. The discovery of Uranus was as epochal as the geographical discoveries of Columbus, Balboa, and Cortez, for it was the first discovery of a major planet since the days of antiquity.

But of all the discoveries in this science [Bonnycastle said], none will be thought more singular than that which has lately been made by Mr. Herschel, Astronomer to his Majesty at Windsor; who, as he was pursuing a design he had formed of observing, with telescopes of his own construction, every part of the heavens, discovered, in the neighbourhood of H Geminorum, a star, which, in magnitude and situation, differed considerably from any that he had before observed, or found described in the catalogues. . . . A discovery of this nature soon engaged the attention of the most eminent astronomers of Europe, and many observations were accordingly made at different times and places. . . . These observations, compared with those of other eminent astronomers, sufficiently prove, that this star is a PRIMARY PLANET, belonging to the solar system, which, till the 13th of March, 1781, when it was first seen by Mr. Herschel, had escaped the observation of every other astronomer, both ancient and modern. . . . This discovery, which at first appears more curious than useful, may yet be of service to astronomy; the circumstances of a primary planet having been unobserved for so many ages, will naturally lead astronomers to examine, with greater accuracy, those small stars which have hitherto been neglected, or only considered as of use in determining the position of the planets. And those observations may produce many new discoveries in the celestial regions, by which our knowledge of the heavenly bodies, and of the immutable laws that govern the universe, will become much more extended.

Keats's discovery of Chapman's *Homer* called up into his consciousness by a process of association Bonnycastle's story of Herschel's discovery of the planet Uranus. It called up into his con-

sciousness also Robertson's story of Balboa's discovery of the Pacific Ocean, the symbol in the second tercet of the sestet of the sonnet —

Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes  
He star'd at the Pacific — and all his men  
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise —  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

Keats confused Balboa with Cortez, as Tennyson observed to Palgrave, but none of his friends noted his mistake. In poetry there are two kinds of error, Aristotle said, the one directly, the other only accidentally connected with the art. If Keats had failed to suggest the emotion with which Balboa stared at the Pacific he would have committed a serious artistic error; his mistake in substituting Cortez for Balboa was an historical error which lies outside the art of poetry.

Robertson described the discovery of the Pacific Ocean as the "boldest enterprise which the Spaniards had hitherto ventured in the New World." The Isthmus of Darien was not above sixty miles in breadth, he said, but it was made almost impenetrable by lofty mountains, marshy valleys, dense forests, and hostile Indians.

At length the Indians assured them, that from the top of the next mountain they should discover the ocean which was the object of their wishes. When, with infinite toil, they had climbed up the greater part of that steep ascent, Balboa commanded his men to halt, and advanced alone to the summit, that he might be the first who should enjoy a spectacle which he had so long desired. As soon as he beheld the South Sea stretching in endless prospect below him, he fell on his knees, and lifting up his hands to heaven, returned thanks to God, who had conducted him to a discovery so beneficial to his country, and so honourable to himself. His followers, observing his transports of joy, rushed forward to join in his wonder, exultation, and gratitude.

Keats derived both the image and the emotions of his simile from Robertson — Cortez stands in advance of his men and stares at the Pacific with joy, wonder, exultation, and gratitude, while they, unable to see the ocean from their position, are silent and tense, watching his expression for sign of the discovery and looking at one another with a wild surmise. The original version of Keats's simile reproduces Robertson's picture more closely:

Or like stout Cortez, when with *wond'ring* eyes,  
He star'd at the Pacific, and all his men  
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise —  
Silent upon a Peak in Darien.

Dr. Richard Garnet suggested to Ernest de Sélincourt that Keats derived this simile from a note to *The Excursion*, a note which



Wordsworth quoted from the notes to William Gilbert's *Hurricane*. There is a casual similarity in phraseology ("ken" and "contemplates, from a sudden promontory, the distant vast Pacific") but a radical difference in image, emotion, and thought.

Keats derived the diction of his simile from Shakespeare's description of Tarquin's first sight of Lucrece:

Enchanted Tarquin answers *with surmise*  
In *silent wonder* of still *-gazing eyes* . . .

The "eagle eyes" of the printed version of the simile were inspired, Hunt suggested, by Titian's portrait of Cortez. "The last line," Hunt said, "makes the mountain a part of the spectacle, and supports the emotion of the rest upon a basis of gigantic tranquility."

*On first looking into Chapman's Homer* is not the best of Keats's sonnets, but it is very nearly the best, and is without doubt the most widely read and admired. In the realms of gold which bards in fealty to Apollo hold, Keats created a metaphor that is highly suggestive and symbolic; and, by comparing his discovery of Chapman's *Homer* with Herschel's discovery of the planet Uranus and Balboa's discovery of the Pacific Ocean he elevated his experience into the sublime and extended it into the universal. In this sonnet, more than in the sonnet *To my Brother George*, Keats showed that in this early period he was acquiring the power of penetrating into the mystery of the great artificial style of Renaissance poetry.

Chapman fired Keats's imagination and stirred his emotions, but he had very little definite influence upon the style and substance of Keats's poetry. Chapman was a robust, imaginative Elizabethan, who spoke out loud and bold in his translation of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. When Clarke read Chapman's translation of the shipwreck of Ulysses in the fifth book of the *Odyssey* he was rewarded by one of Keats's "delightful stares":

Then forth he came, his both knees falt'ring, both  
His strong hands hanging down, and all with froth  
His cheeks and nostrils flowing, voice and breath  
Spent to all use, and down he sank to death.  
*The sea had soak'd his heart through; all his veins*  
*His toils had rack'd t' a labouring woman's pains.*  
Dead-weary was he.

"On an after occasion —," Clarke said, "I showed him the couplet, in Pope's translation, upon the same passage: —

From mouth and nose the briny torrent ran,  
And *lost in lassitude lay all the man.* [! ! !]"

Chapman's influence upon Keats was as injurious as it was salutary. "In our reverence for the greatest of Elizabethan translators and our gratitude to him for the inspiration which he gave to Keats," Ernest de Sélincourt observed justly, "we should remember also that no writer of his eminence ever took grosser liberties with the language, or bent it more remorselessly to fit the Procrustean bed of his ideas." Comparing the style of Keats with that of Chapman, de Sélincourt<sup>23</sup> found that Chapman might have influenced Keats in the following respects: (1) the use of abstract nouns in -ing, -ment, and -ty. embracings, deservings, murmurings, deplorings; designment, procurement, intendment; effeminacies, satieties, transparencies, fantasies; (2) the use of adjectives in -y: clifty, beamy, cavy, cloddy, gleby, guffy, foody, flamy, barky, nervy, orby, oxy, rooty, spurry; and (3) "an occasional familiarity of phrase which seems singularly incongruous in a heroic poem," as, for example, when Calypso addressed Ulysses as follows:

*O ye are a shrewd one, and so habited  
In taking heed thou know'st not what it is  
To be unwary, nor use words amiss  
How hast thou charm'd me, were I ne'er so sly!*

Miss Grace Warren Landrum,<sup>24</sup> who also made a detailed study of the influence of Chapman upon Keats, compared their practice of rhyming the final syllables of polysyllables with monosyllables and their use of two patterns of compound words, the noun-noun and the adjective-present-participle. As a result of her study Miss Landrum was forced to conclude that "Keats's traceable borrowings from Chapman" were "far less numerous than one would expect."

Before he read Chapman Keats had already employed the abstract nouns in -ing, -ment, and -ty, the adjectives in -y, the familiar, vulgar diction, and the licenses in rhyme which de Sélincourt and Miss Landrum noted. Keats merely found in Chapman a precedent for defects in style which he had already learned and imitated from Leigh Hunt.

4

In October 1816 Clarke and Keats not only read Chapman, but also read the poems which Keats had composed and discussed his decision to enter upon a poetic career. The sonnet *On first looking*

<sup>23</sup> Ernest de Sélincourt, *Poems of John Keats*, Fourth Edition, 1921, p. 591.

<sup>24</sup> Grace Warren Landrum, "More concerning Chapman's Homer and Keats," *PMLA*, Vol. XLII, pp. 986-1009

into Chapman's *Homer* convinced Clarke of the authenticity of Keats's genius; and, knowing Keats's admiration for Leigh Hunt, Clarke immediately took steps to introduce Keats to Hunt.

It was about this period [Clarke said] that, going to call upon Mr. Leigh Hunt, who then occupied a pretty little cottage in the Vale of Health, on Hampstead Heath, I took with me two or three of the poems I had received from Keats. I could not but anticipate that Hunt would speak encouragingly, and indeed approvingly, of the compositions — written, too, by a youth under age; but my partial spirit was not prepared for the unhesitating and prompt admiration which broke forth before he had read twenty lines of the first poem. Horace Smith happened to be there on the occasion, and he was not less demonstrative in his appreciation of their merits. The piece which he read out was the sonnet, "How many Bards gild the Lapses of Time" marking with particular emphasis and approval the last six lines. . . .

"After making numerous and eager inquiries" about Keats's personality, especially about his "peculiarities of mind and manner," Hunt requested Clarke to "bring him over to the Vale of Health."

That was a "red-letter day" in the young poet's life [Clarke continued], and one which will never fade with me while memory lasts.

The character and expression of Keats's features would arrest even the casual passenger in the street; and now they were wrought to a tone of animation that I could not but watch with interest, knowing what was in store for him from the bland encouragement, and Spartan deference in attention, with fascinating conversational eloquence, that he was to encounter and receive. As we approached the Heath, there was the rising and accelerated step, with the gradual subsidence of all talk. The interview, which stretched into three "morning calls," was the prelude to many after-scenes and saunterings about Caen Wood and its neighbourhood; for Keats was suddenly made a familiar of the household, and was always welcomed.

This glowing narration has the ring of authenticity. Such details as "the rising and accelerated step" with which Keats approached Hunt's cottage and "the gradual subsidence of all talk" are vital transcripts from life. Clarke's story is borne out, moreover, both in spirit and in fact by the story which Hunt published in 1828 in *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries*.

Mr. Clarke, junior, his schoolmaster's son, a reader of genuine discernment, had encouraged with great warmth the genius that he saw in the young poet; and it was to Mr. Clarke I was indebted for my acquaintance with him. I shall never forget the impression made upon me by the exuberant specimens of genuine though young poetry that were laid before me, and the promise of which was seconded by the fine fervid countenance of the writer. We became intimate on the spot, and I found the young poet's heart as warm as his imagination. We read and walked together, and used to write verses of an evening upon a given subject. No imaginative pleasure was left unnoticed by us, or unenjoyed; from

the recollection of the bards and patriots of old, to the luxury of a summer rain at our window, or the clicking of the coal in winter-time. Not long afterwards, having the pleasure of entertaining at dinner Mr. Godwin, Mr. Hazlitt, and Mr. Basil Montague, I showed them the verses of my young friend, and they were pronounced to be as extraordinary as I thought them. One of them was that noble sonnet on first reading Chapman's Homer, which terminates with so energetic a calmness, and which completely announced the new poet taking possession.

"Very shortly after his installation at the cottage, and on the day after one of our visits," Clarke said, "he [Keats] gave in the following sonnet, a characteristic appreciation of the spirit in which he had been received: —"

Keen, fitful gusts are whisp'ring here and there  
 Among the bushes half leafless, and dry;  
 The stars look very cold about the sky,  
 And I have many miles on foot to fare.  
 Yet feel I little of the cool bleak air,  
 Or of the dead leaves rustling drearily,  
 Or of those silver lamps that burn on high,  
 Or of the distance from home's pleasant lair:  
 For I am brimfull of the friendliness  
 That in a little cottage I have found;  
 Of fair-hair'd Milton's eloquent distress,  
 And all his love for gentle Lycid drown'd;  
 Of lovely Laura in her light green dress,  
 And faithful Petrarch gloriously crown'd.

The date of Keats's introduction to Hunt is the most disputed problem in his biography. Johannes Hoops was the first critic, I believe, to cite contemporary statements which Hunt made in *The Examiner*. On December 1, 1816 Hunt printed in *The Examiner* an article entitled *Young Poets*. After discussing Shelley and John Hamilton Reynolds he said:

The last of these young aspirants whom we have met with, and who promise to help the new school to revive Nature and

"To put a spirit of youth in everything," —

is, we believe, the youngest of them all, and just of age. His name is John Keats. He has not yet published anything except in a newspaper; but a set of his manuscripts was handed us the other day, and fairly surprised us with the truth of their ambition, and ardent grappling with Nature. In the following Sonnet there is one incorrect rhyme, which might be easily altered. . . . [Hunt proceeded to quote and discuss the sonnet *On first looking into Chapman's Homer*.]

On June 1, 1817 Hunt printed in *The Examiner* his review of Keats's *Poems*. Referring to his earlier notice of Keats in *The Examiner* for December 1, 1816 he said:

This is the production of the young writer, whom we had the pleasure of announcing to the public a short time since, and several of whose Sonnets have appeared meanwhile in the *Examiner* with the signature of J. K. From these and stronger evidences in the book itself, the readers will conclude that the author and his critic are personal friends; and they are so, — made however, in the first instance, by nothing but his poetry, and at no greater distance of time than the announcement above-mentioned. We had published one of his sonnets in our paper, without knowing more of him than any other anonymous correspondent; but at the period in question, a friend brought us one morning some copies of verses, which he said were from the pen of a youth. We had not been led, generally speaking, by a good deal of experience in these matters, to expect pleasure from introductions of the kind, so much as pain; but we had not read more than a dozen lines, when we recognized "a young poet indeed."

Taking all the evidence which we have into consideration, I have concluded that Clarke introduced Keats to Hunt in the latter part of October 1816, after the composition of the sonnet *On first looking into Chapman's Homer*.

In the first place, Hunt's statements in *The Examiner* are the most contemporary and the most definite evidence of the date of the meeting of the two poets. In the review of June 1, 1817, Hunt said that, when he printed the *Sonnet to Solitude* in *The Examiner* for May 5, 1816, he knew no more of Keats than of any other correspondent. In the article of December 1, 1816, he said that a set of Keats's manuscripts was handed to him "the other day"; and in the review of June 1, 1817, he said a friend brought this set of manuscripts to him before introducing Keats to him and that his personal friendship with Keats began at no greater distance of time than the article of December 1, 1816. Although we grant that Hunt desired to anticipate and to forestall a possible charge that his praise of Keats's poetry was instigated by personal friendship, we must admit that his statements of the commencement of his friendship with Keats cannot designate a period earlier than the latter part of October 1816.

In the second place, the sonnet which Clarke said was written "very shortly after" Keats's "installation at the cottage" of Leigh Hunt and which expresses Keats's first reactions to Hunt's friendly encouragement and genial hospitality describes late fall with its "keen, fitful gusts," its "cool, bleak air," its "stars looking very cold about the sky," and its "bushes half leafless and bare."

In the third place, both Clarke and Hunt stressed the sudden and continuous intimacy of Keats with Hunt as the immediate result of their first meeting. This sudden and continuous intimacy could not have begun before October; for, if Clarke had introduced Keats to

Hunt in the summer of 1816, their intimacy would have been interrupted in July by Keats's preparation for his examination as an apothecary and in August and September by his vacation at Margate.

In the fourth place, we may infer both from Hunt's article in *The Examiner* for December 1, 1816 and from his recollections of Keats in *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries* (published 1828) that the sonnet *On first looking into Chapman's Homer*, which was composed in October 1816, was one of the poems in the "set of manuscripts" which Clarke gave to Hunt before the meeting between Keats and Hunt took place. The order of events in Clarke's *Recollections of Keats* indicates also that Keats composed the sonnet *On first looking into Chapman's Homer* before he was introduced to Hunt.

Finally, we must consider the mental attitudes of Keats and Clarke and Hunt in the matter of the introduction of Keats to Hunt in 1816. There was a modesty in Keats's temperament that restrained him from revealing his early poems to Clarke. The sonnet which he composed on the day Leigh Hunt left prison, February 3, 1815, was the first poem which he showed to Clarke; and Clarke recalled, more than thirty years afterwards, the "conscious look and hesitation" with which Keats offered it to him. Even in September 1816, after Keats had decided to become a poet by profession, he wrote his epistle to Clarke with hesitation; for, he said, he feared that his poetry was of too poor a savor to please Clarke, whose palate "gladdened" in the flavor of sparkling helicon. When he returned to London from Margate, however, he gave Clarke copies of his poems and confided to him his ambition to become a poet. The sonnet *On first looking into Chapman's Homer* convinced Clarke that Keats was a poet as well as a lover of poetry and he took steps to introduce Keats to Leigh Hunt. He knew Hunt's disinclination to meet young poetasters and he showed Hunt a batch of Keats's poems before he asked permission of Hunt to introduce Keats to him. Hunt broke forth into generous expressions of admiration before he had ready twenty lines of the first poem, which was doubtless the epistle to Clarke, but he made numerous inquiries about the peculiarities of Keats's mind and manner before he requested Clarke to bring him over to the Vale of Health.

Keats's friendship with Hunt had a momentous effect upon his poetic career. It brought him at once into a brilliant circle of poets, painters, musicians, critics, and publishers. In Hunt's little cottage in the Vale of Health on Hampstead Heath, he met in the fall and

winter of 1816 Benjamin Robert Haydon, John Hamilton Reynolds, Horace Smith, Basil Montague, William Hazlitt, Shelley, Vincent Novello, William Godwin, Charles Lamb, and Charles and James Ollier.

Hunt's lively, cheerful personality and optimistic philosophy of life profoundly affected Keats. Hunt said that his temperament was torn between a morbid sensibility which he inherited from his mother and the invincible animal spirits which he inherited from his father. He succumbed to hypochondriasm on three occasions in his life, but he was ruled for the greater part of his life by his lively animal spirits. Charles Cowden Clarke said that Hunt had a "most bewitching spell of manner." "At the time of our acquaintance," Benjamin Robert Haydon said, "he really was, whether in private conversation or surrounded by his friends, in honesty of principle, and unfailing love of truth, in wit and fun, quotation and impromptu, one of the most delightful beings I ever knew." After he had quarrelled with Hunt, Haydon met him at the house of a friend. "He was so exceedingly delightful," Haydon confessed, "I could not resist the dog. We forgot our quarrels, and walked away together, quoting, and joking, and laughing, as if nothing had happened."

Hunt's sensibility as well as his animal spirits helped to form his attitude to life. If his animal spirits inclined him to see the bright side of things, his sensibility made him shrink from whatever was ugly, evil, and consequently painful. "He is a man of sensibility tinged with morbidity," Haydon said, "and of such sensitive organisation of body, that the plant is not more alive to touch than he. I remember once, walking in a field, we came to a muddy place concealed by the grass. The moment Hunt touched it, he shrank back, saying, 'It's muddy!' as if he meant [*sic*] that it was full of adders." The warring instincts of Hunt's temperament produced a personality that was weak and cowardly in some respects but strong and courageous in others. Haydon was only just when he said that, although Hunt would have feared to put his foot in the mud, he would have endured to be burned at the stake for a principle. Hunt rationalized his instinct to seek the pleasant things of life and to avoid the painful into the optimistic philosophy that evil is transitory, that good is eternal, and that present evil contributes to ultimate good.

In his friendship with Hunt, Keats enjoyed that "brotherhood in song" for which his soul had yearned. As they walked upon Hampstead Heath and as they sat by Hunt's fireside, they read poetry,

discussed poetic principles, and composed poems upon given subjects in friendly emulation. "Our talk was made up of idealisms," Hunt said, "In the street we were in the thick of the old woods."

The friendliness which Keats found in Hunt's cottage on Hampstead Heath stirred his emotions and excited his imagination. Very shortly after he met Hunt and on the day after one of his visits, as we have seen, he composed the sonnet *Keen fitful gusts are whisp'ring here and there*. This sonnet, which is written in the natural style, is one of the two or three good sonnets which sprang out of his association with Hunt. Shortly after he composed this sonnet, Clarke said, Keats composed a sonnet *On leaving some Friends at an early Hour*. He constructed this sonnet, as he had constructed the one in memory of his grandmother, out of the conventional ideas and artificial diction which he had discarded in the fall of 1815. He wove the texture of the sonnet out of such artificial phrases as "golden pen," "heap'd up flowers," "hymning angel," "silver strings," "heavenly harp," "pearly car," "pink robes," and "wavy hair." He published these two sonnets — the one very good and the other very poor — in his *Poems* of 1817.

✓ In *Sleep and Poetry* Keats drew the most vivid and the most complete picture of his association with Hunt in November and December 1816. He described the inspiring quality of Hunt's friendliness as follows:

I turn full hearted to the friendly aids  
That smooth the path of honour; brotherhood,  
And friendliness the nurse of mutual good.  
The hearty grasp that sends a pleasant sonnet  
Into the brain ere one can think upon it;  
The silence when some rhymes are coming out;  
And when they're come, the very pleasant rout:  
The message certain to be done to-morrow.  
'Tis perhaps as well that it should be to borrow  
Some precious book from out its snug retreat,  
To cluster round it when we next shall meet.

Keats was inspired to compose this poem one night in November when, after a symposium with Hunt, he was sleeping upon a little couch in Hunt's study, the walls of which were adorned with prints of famous pictures and busts of the poets and the patriots of old.

the chimes  
Of friendly voices had just given place  
To as sweet a silence, when I 'gan retrace  
The pleasant day, upon a couch at ease.



It was a poet's house who keeps the keys  
 Of pleasure's temple. Round about were hung  
 The glorious features of the bards who sung  
 In other ages — cold and sacred busts  
 Smiled at each other. Happy he who trusts  
 To clear Futurity his darling fame!  
 Then there were fauns and satyrs taking aim  
 At swelling apples with a frisky leap  
 And reaching fingers, 'mid a luscious heap  
 Of vine leaves. Then there rose to view a fane  
 Of liny marble, and thereto a train  
 Of nymphs approaching fairly o'er the sward:  
 One, loveliest, holding her white hand toward  
 The dazzling sun-rise: two sisters sweet  
 Bending their graceful figures till they meet  
 Over the trippings of a little child:  
 And some are hearing, eagerly, the wild  
 Thrilling liquidity of dewy piping.  
 See, in another picture, nymphs are wiping  
 Cherishingly Diana's timorous limbs; —  
 A fold of lawny mantle dabbling swims  
 At the bath's edge, and keeps a gentle motion  
 With the subsiding crystal: as when ocean  
 Heaves calmly its broad swelling smoothness o'er  
 Its rocky marge, and balances once more  
 The patient weeds; that now unshent by foam  
 Feel all about their undulating home.

Sappho's meek head was there half smiling down  
 At nothing; just as though the earnest frown  
 Of over thinking had that moment gone  
 From off her brow, and left her all alone.

Great Alfred's too, with anxious, pitying eyes,  
 As if he always listened to the sighs  
 Of the goaded world; and Kosciusko's worn  
 By horrid suffrance — mightily forlorn.

Petrarch, outstepping from the shady green,  
 Starts at the sight of Laura; nor can wean  
 His eyes from her sweet face. Most happy they!  
 For over them was seen a free display  
 Of out-spread wings, and from between them shone  
 The face of Poesy: from off her throne  
 She overlook'd things that I scarce could tell.

In this famous description of Hunt's study, Keats surveyed the world of poets, painters, and patriots which Hunt had disclosed to his devouring mind. The prints that adorned the walls of the study have been identified by Sir Sidney Colvin<sup>25</sup> as prints of Raphael's

<sup>25</sup> Sir Sidney Colvin, p. 54.

*Poetry*, Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* (described in verses preceding the quotation above), Poussin's *Empire of Flora*, *Bacchanals*, and *Venus and Adonis*, and Stothard's *Bathers*, *Vintage*, and *Petrarch and Laura*. Pictures, statues, and vases, as well as poems, inspired Keats's imagination and furnished materials for his poetry.

As Keats lay on the couch in Hunt's study, his mind agitated with a ferment of thought and emotion, he intuited *Sleep and Poetry* and resolved to begin the composition of it that very day.

The very sense of where I was might well  
Keep Sleep aloof. but more than that there came  
Thought after thought to nourish up the flame  
Within my breast, so that the morning light  
Surprised me even from a sleepless night;  
And up I rose refresh'd, and glad, and gay,  
Resolving to begin that very day  
These lines; and howsoever they be done,  
I leave them as a father does his son.

Although Keats began *Sleep and Poetry* in November, he did not finish it before the end of December; and so, before we consider the poetic principles which he defined in it, we must study other forces which played upon his mind while he was formulating these principles.

Hunt, like Keats, celebrated their friendship in poetry. On December 1, the day on which his article on the young poets, Shelley, Reynolds, and Keats, appeared in *The Examiner*, he wrote the following sonnet to Keats, acknowledging gracefully Keats's admiration for him, prophesying that Keats would win the laurel crown, and mentioning Charles Cowden Clarke, who had introduced Keats to him.

#### TO JOHN KEATS

'Tis well you think me truly one of those,  
Whose sense discerns the loveliness of things;  
For surely as I feel the bird that sings  
Behind the leaves, or dawn as it up grows,  
Or the rich bee rejoicing as he goes,  
Or the glad issue of emerging springs,  
Or overhead the glide of a dove's wings,  
Or turf, or trees, or, midst of all, repose:

And surely as I feel things lovelier still,  
The human look, and the harmonious form  
Containing woman, and the smile in ill,  
And such a heart as Charles's, wise and warm, —  
As surely as all this, I see, ev'n now,  
Young Keats, a flowering laurel on your brow.

It had been surmised that Hunt composed this sonnet in February or in March 1817 in reply to the sonnet in which Keats dedicated his first volume of poems to Hunt; but Edmund Blunden<sup>26</sup> examined an autograph manuscript of it which was dated December 1, 1816.

In November and December, Keats moved in three distinct social circles — that of his brothers and their friends, that of his former fellow students of surgery, and Hunt's literary coterie. He recorded his experiences in each of these social circles in a continuous stream of sonnets.

In the first half of November, George Keats, offended by the "domineering behaviour" of Hodginson, Abbey's junior partner, resigned his clerkship and left his lodgings at the counting-room. John and Tom immediately gave up their lodgings in the Poultry and took more commodious lodgings with George at 76 Cheapside. The three brothers were passionately devoted to one another. "My love for my Brothers from the early loss of our parents and even for earlier Misfortunes," Keats said, "has grown into a[n] affection 'passing the Love of Woman'" After the vicissitudes of their lives, the brothers found a peculiar happiness in living together in the same lodgings. On Tom's birthday, November 18, Keats composed a sonnet in which he expressed the friendly sympathy and quiet peace which he enjoyed with his brothers as they sat by their fireside in the evening. In the *Poems* of 1817, the sonnet is entitled *To My Brothers* and is dated "November 18, 1816." In Tom Keats's Copy-book, Harry Buxton Forman said, it is entitled "Written to his brother Tom on his Birthday" and is dated "Nov. 18, 1816." Forman discovered also the first draft of the two quatrains, together with the first draft of the sonnet *To My Brother George*, on a few leaves which had been torn from a small pocket note-book and which had been preserved by Joseph Severn.

#### TO MY BROTHERS.

Small, busy flames play through the fresh laid coals,  
 And their faint cracklings o'er our silence creep  
 Like whispers of the household gods that keep  
 A gentle empire o'er fraternal souls.  
 And while, for rhymes, I search around the poles,  
 Your eyes are fix'd, as in poetic sleep,  
 Upon the lore so voluble and deep,  
 That aye at fall of night our care condoles.  
 This is your birth-day Tom, and I rejoice  
 That thus it passes smoothly, quietly.

<sup>26</sup> Edmund Blunden, *Leigh Hunt, A Biography*, p. 108.

Many such eves of gently whisp'ring noise  
 May we together pass, and calmly try  
 What are this world's true joys, — ere the great voice,  
 From its fair face, shall bid our spirits fly

November 18, 1816.

Ernest de Sélincourt said that the familiar style of this sonnet was influenced by that series of Wordsworth's sonnets which begins,

I am not one who much or oft delight  
 To season my fireside with personal talk. . . .

Referring to books, especially to *Othello* and *The Faerie Queene*, Wordsworth said:

There find I personal themes, a plenteous store,  
 Matter wherein right *voluble* I am. . . .

Keats had read Wordsworth's sonnets, and he may have recalled Wordsworth's use of "voluble" in reference to books; but he caught the mood and the setting of his sonnet, the warm friendliness of the fireside, from Hunt's sonnets. In a sonnet *To Thomas Barnes*, Hunt described the charm that the stillness of the country has for a world-fretted ear:

This charm our evening hours duly restore, --  
*Nought heard through all our little, lulled abode,*  
*Save the crisp fire, or leaf of book turned o'er,*  
 Or watch-dog, or the ring of frosty road.  
 Wants there no other sound then? — Yes, one more, --  
 The voice of friendly visiting, long owed.

And, in a sonnet *To T. M. Alsager*, he alluded to evenings passed by the fireside in his friend's study:

May peace be still found there, and evening leisure,  
 And that which gives a room both eye and heart,  
*The clear, warm fire, that clicks along the coal;*  
*And never harsher sound, than the fine pleasure*  
*Of lettered friend, or music's mingling art,*  
 That fetches out in smiles the mutual soul.

Keats must have broken openly and decisively with the profession of surgery soon after he came of age on October 29, 1816. His sudden and intimate friendships with Hunt, Haydon, and Reynolds, interminable and impassioned discussions of poetry, and the composition of a continuous stream of sonnets which were inspired by his friendships, must have put an end to his attendance in the hospitals. In a letter which he wrote to Clarke on October 31, there

is a significant sentence: "I pray thee let me know when you go to Ollier's and where he resides — this I forgot to ask you. . . ." We may infer from this letter that, as early as October 31, he had decided to publish a volume of poems and that he had discussed with Clarke the possibility of securing the Olliers as his publishers. After this decision, I presume, he would not long have continued to study surgery.

Keats's rapid and triumphant progress in his poetic career was darkened, however, by the thought of the inevitable interview with his guardian, Richard Abbey, a self-made man, who despised poetry as useless. The interview, which Keats dreaded and which he postponed as long as possible, was brought about finally by Abbey himself. After Keats had come of age on October 29, Abbey, no longer his guardian but still his trustee, sought and found an opening for him as an apothecary in Tottenham. In Taylor's memorandum of Abbey's recollections of Keats, there is a story of this interview.

John was apprenticed to a Surgeon at Edmonton, who did not however conduct himself as M<sup>r</sup> A. conceived he ought to have done to his young Pupil, & partly to punish him by the Opposition, — partly because M<sup>rs</sup> Jennings was known & respected in the Neighbourhood, on which Acc<sup>t</sup> her Grandson had a better Introduction there than elsewhere, it was M<sup>r</sup> Abby's advice that John should commence Business at Tottenham as a Surgeon. He communicated his Plans to his Ward but his Surprise was not moderate, to hear in Reply, that he did not intend to be a Surgeon — Not intend to be a Surgeon! why what do you mean to be? I mean to rely upon my Ability as a Poet — John, ~~Are you Mad or Silly~~ you are either Mad or a Fool, to talk in so absurd a Manner. My Mind is made up, said the youngster very quietly. I know that I possess abilities greater than most Men, and therefore I am determined to gain my living by exercising them. — Seeing nothing could be done Abby called him a Silly Boy, & prophesied a speedy Termination to his inconsiderate Enterprise. — He brought me not long after, says this worthy man, a little Book which he had got printed — I took it & said I would look at it because it was his writing, otherwise I should not have troubled my Head with any such Thing — When we next met I said, Well John I have read your Book, & it reminds me of the Quaker's Horse which was hard to catch, & good for nothing when he was caught — So your Book is hard to understand & good for nothing when it is understood. Do you know, says the old Man, I don't think he ever forgave me for uttering this Opinion, which however was the Truth.

Abbey's recollections comprise three interviews with Keats. The first, in which Abbey proposed to establish Keats as an apothecary and surgeon in Tottenham and Keats replied that he had decided to be a poet, took place, it seems, shortly after Keats came of age. The second occurred very soon after Keats published his first volume of poems on March 4, 1817; and the third, a little later.

Abbey's opposition to Keats's decision to give up the profession of surgery and to take up that of poetry is justifiable. He had drawn upon the estate in his charge to pay Keats's education as an apothecary and surgeon, and he expected him to practise his profession and repay the estate. George Keats wrote Dilke in 1824: "Between the time of John's leaving the surgeon and his coming of age he and Tom (who had been with Mr. Abbey and left) spent 3 times their incomes." Abbey's manner of opposing Keats's decision, however, was domineering, scornful, brutal. It gives us a most unpleasant impression of his personality.

In a sonnet *To a young Lady who sent me a laurel crown*, Keats expressed his immediate reactions to his interview with his guardian. Despite his resolute bearing, he was deeply humiliated and depressed by Abbey's brutal scorn of his poetic genius. His brothers, bitterly indignant at Abbey's insults, sought in vain to lift him out of his morbid depression. That evening, I presume, the three brothers called upon Georgiana Augusta Wylie, the girl with whom George was in love; and the feminine sympathy of this intelligent, high-spirited girl restored Keats's courage and confidence. The next morning Miss Wylie sent him a laurel crown, and he responded with a sonnet.

To a young Lady who sent me a laurel crown  
 Fresh morning gusts have blown away all fear  
 From my glad bosom, — now from gloominess  
 I mount for ever — not an atom less  
 Than the proud laurel shall content my bier.  
 No! by the eternal stars! or why sit here  
 In the Sun's eye, and 'gainst my temples press  
 Apollo's very leaves, woven to bless  
 By thy white fingers and thy spirit clear.  
 Lo! who dares say, "Do this?" Who dares call down  
 My will from its high purpose? Who say, "Stand,"  
 Or "Go?" This mighty moment I would frown  
 On abject Caesars — not the stoutest band  
 Of mailed heroes should tear off my crown:  
 Yet would I kneel and kiss thy gentle hand!

In the sestet Keats expressed his defiance of Abbey's dictatorial interference with his "high purpose" to be a poet; and in the octave he expressed his gratitude to Miss Wylie for giving him courage to persist in his defiance of Abbey. He always regarded this defiance of Abbey as the chief example of courage which he manifested in his life. "In no period of my life," he wrote Charles Brown in September 1819, "have I acted with any selfwill but in throwing up the apothecary profession."

My interpretation of this sonnet is based on internal evidence alone. There are two transcripts of the sonnet, one in Woodhouse's Commonplace Book and another in his Book of Transcripts. In a note to the second of these transcripts, Woodhouse said that he copied the sonnet "from J. K.'s MS." but he said nothing about the date of its composition, the occasion of its inspiration, or the young lady to whom it was addressed. Taylor's memorandum of Abbey's recollections of the interview in which Keats announced his intention to be a poet explains, I have no doubt, the situation which inspired the sonnet. I have conjectured that Georgiana Augusta Wylie was the young lady who sent the laurel crown to Keats; for, of all the young ladies whom he knew, she was the only one who had the magnanimity to restore his confidence in his "high purpose" to be a poet.

Biographers of Keats state that he and his brother George became acquainted with Miss Wylie as early as the fall of 1815 or the winter of 1815 and 1816. They base this statement upon the hypothesis that Keats wrote the valentine *Hadst thou lived in days of old* for his brother George to send to Miss Wylie on February 14, 1816. Woodhouse's notes upon this valentine, however, prove that Keats wrote it for his brother George to send to Mary Frogley. Likewise Woodhouse's notes upon the song *O come dearest Emma*, which Keats composed probably in the late summer of 1815, prove that he composed it for the Misses Mathew instead of for Miss Wylie. The sonnet *To a young Lady who sent me a laurel crown* is, if my conjecture be accepted, the first record that Keats and his brother George were acquainted with Miss Wylie. The second record of their association with her is the sonnet which Keats addressed to her in December 1816. I believe that they met her for the first time in the summer of 1816, at which time indeed she was only fourteen years of age.

Keats published his sonnet *To G. A. W.* in his *Poems* of 1817. There is an autograph of the sonnet, addressed "To Miss Wylie," in George Keats's Scrap-book (which was originally Miss Wylie's Scrap-book). There is also a transcript in Tom Keats's Copy-book, entitled "Sonnet to a Lady" and dated "Dec. 1816." This graceful sonnet, like the valentine *Hadst thou lived in days of old*, was influenced by the style and especially by the pastoral and classical conventions of the seventeenth-century Spenserians. It was influenced also by the diction and versification of Hunt's *Story of Rimini*, having, for example, double rhymes (sweetly/completely/neatly) and the rhyme of the final syllables of polysyllables with monosyllables (listenest/best/rest).

Georgiana Augusta Wylie was the daughter of Mrs. James Wylie, the widow of an officer of marines. She had two brothers, Charles and Henry, who are mentioned casually in Keats's letters. George Keats and Miss Wylie were married in May 1818, and emigrated to America, settling at first in Henderson and later in Louisville, Kentucky. Keats accompanied them to Liverpool and on the way introduced his friend, Henry Stephens, to his sister-in-law. Stephens afterwards described her for Lord Houghton as follows.

Rather short, not what might be called strictly handsome, but looked like a being whom any man of moderate sensibility might easily love. She had the imaginative poetical cast. Somewhat singular and girlish in her attire. . . . There was something original about her, and John seemed to regard her as a being whom he delighted to honour, and introduced her with evident satisfaction.

Keats, indeed, had the greatest liking and admiration for his sister-in-law. In June 1818 he wrote Bailey:

I had know[n] my sister in Law some time before she was my Sister and was very fond of her. I like her better and better — she is the most disinterested woman I ever knew — that is to say she goes beyond degree in it.

In October 1818 he wrote to her:

I have a tenderness for you, and an admiration which I feel to be as great and more chaste than I can have for any woman in the world. You will mention Fanny [his sister who was fifteen years old] — her character is not formed, her identity does not press upon me as yours does. I hope from the bottom of my heart that I may one day feel as much for her as I do for you. . . .

In the light of Taylor's memorandum of Abbey's recollections of the interview in which Keats announced to Abbey that he intended to be a poet, I shall hazard an interpretation of a sonnet of Keats's which Henry Stephens transcribed and preserved in a volume of transcripts of Keats's poems, containing eight poems in addition to all of the poems which Keats published in 1817.

Before he went to feed with owls and bats  
 Nebuchadnezzar had an ugly dream,  
 Worse than an Hus'if's when she thinks her cream  
 Made a Naumachia for mice and rats.  
 So scared, he sent for that "Good King of Cats"  
 Young Daniel, who soon did pluck away the beam  
 From out his eye, and said he did not deem  
 The sceptre worth a straw — his Cushions old door-mats.  
 A horrid nightmare similar somewhat  
 Of late has haunted a most motley crew,  
 Most loggerheads and Chapmen — we are told  
 That any Daniel tho' he be a sot  
 Can make the lying lips turn pale of hue  
 By belching out "ye are that head of Gold."



I conjecture that, sometime after he had recovered from the depression which had been caused by his interview with Abbey, Keats discussed the interview with his friend Henry Stephens and composed this jesting sonnet upon it. There runs through the sonnet a contrast between Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel, Abbey and Keats, and money and art. A motley crew of Abbeys — loggerheads and chapmen, whose god is money — had a horrid dream that they could force Keats to be an apothecary; but Keats, a young Daniel of poetry, made the lying lips turn pale by belching out "ye are that head of gold." The jest gained point in consideration of the fact that Stephens, in whose presence Keats wrote the sonnet, was preparing to practise the profession of apothecary and surgeon.

Two or three weeks after he met Leigh Hunt, Keats met Benjamin Robert Haydon, the historical painter, who in March 1817, four months later, persuaded him to free himself from Hunt's influence. Haydon had met Hunt in 1808, when he was painting *Dentatus*, and had entered into an intimate and enthusiastic friendship with him. Their friendship was still warm and glowing in the fall of 1816. On October 27, 1816, Haydon wrote David Wilkie:

I have been at Hampstead this fortnight for my eyes, and shall return with my body much stronger for application. The greater part of my time has been spent in Leigh Hunt's society, who is certainly one of the most delightful companions.

While Haydon was in Hampstead in the latter part of October, he read the set of Keats's poems which Clarke had given to Hunt and he requested Clarke to introduce Keats to him.

At his [Haydon's] own eager request [Clarke said], after reading the manuscript specimens I had left with Leigh Hunt, I had introduced their author to him. . . . ["Recollections of Keats," *Atlantic Monthly*, January 1861]

Keats was delighted by the opportunity to meet Haydon. On October 31, he wrote Clarke:

My daintie Davie,

I will be as punctual as the Bee to the Clover. Very glad am I at the thoughts of seeing so soon this glorious Haydon and all his creation. I pray thee let me know when you go to Ollier's and where he resides — this I forgot to ask you — and tell me also when you will help me waste a sullen day — God 'ield you —

J K

The date set for Keats's visit to Haydon's painting-room was postponed, however, by Haydon, who had a ticket for that night to see *Timon of Athens* at Drury Lane. Keats wrote Clarke:

To C C C greeting

Whereas I have received a Note from that worthy Gentleman M<sup>r</sup> Haydon, to the purport of his not being able to see us on this days Evening for that he hath an order for the Orchestra to see Timon y<sup>c</sup> Misantrophas, and begging us to excuse the same — it behoveth me to make this thing known to you as a manifest Reason.

So I rest your Hermit — John Keats

This note is undated; but Miss Lowell proved that it refers to the visit alluded to in the note of October 31 by discovering that *Timon of Athens* was played at Drury Lane from October 28 to November 6. The note was written, therefore, between October 31 and November 6.

Haydon, who was careless in statements of facts, said that he met Keats at Leigh Hunt's. In his *Autobiography* he said:

About this time I met John Keats, at Leigh Hunt's, and was amazingly interested by his prematurity of intellectual and poetical power.

I read one or two of his sonnets and formed a very high idea of his genius. After a short time I liked him so much that a general invitation on my part followed, and we became extremely intimate. He visited my painting-room at all times, and at all times was welcome.<sup>27</sup>

Clarke's recollections, supported by Keats's contemporary letters, prove, however, that Clarke introduced Keats to Haydon in Haydon's painting-room. This introduction, as we shall see, took place on the evening of November 19.

In the fall of 1816, Haydon was at the climax of his melodramatic career. He described himself as energetic, fiercely ambitious, full of grand ideas and romantic hopes, believing the world too little for his art, trusting all, fearing none, and pouring forth his thoughts in vigorous language. His love for his country, his zeal for religion, and his unbounded egotism inspired him with the ambition of establishing a great school of historical painting in England. He had "irresistible and perpetual urgings of future greatness." "I have been," he said, "like a man with air balloons under his armpits and ether in his soul. While I was painting, walking, or thinking, beaming flashes of energy followed and impressed me. . . . They came over me, and shot across me, and shook me, till I lifted up my heart and thanked God."

Heedless of poverty and impatient of advice, Haydon painted one huge canvas after another, the smallest of which was twelve feet and ten inches by ten feet and ten inches. He finished *The Repose of the Holy Family* in 1807, *Dentatus* in 1809, *Macbeth* in 1812, and *The Judgment of Solomon* in 1814. He quarrelled with the Royal

<sup>27</sup> Tom Taylor, *Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon, Historical Painter, from his Autobiography and Journals*, New York, 1853, Vol. I, pp. 317-318.

Academy over the position in which *Dentatus* was hung and with his patron, Sir George Beaumont, over the dimensions of *Macbeth*. He began an indomitable but disastrous contest with the patrons and the Academicians which distracted his energy from his painting, denied him professional recognition, and prevented the sale of his pictures. He wrote two trenchant articles for *The Examiner*, one on Payne Knight, a wealthy patron, and the other on the Academy.

After Haydon had finished *The Judgment of Solomon* in 1814, he took stock of his resources and found that he was £1100 in debt. His reaction was characteristic. "As I tottered down the Haymarket I leaned on a post and said: 'What shall I do if it do not sell?' 'Order another canvass,' said the voice within, 'and begin a greater work.' 'So I will,' I inwardly replied and thenceforth lost all dependence." When the picture was exhibited in the Water Color Society, it was a popular success. The connoisseurs and the Academicians dismissed it as "distorted stuff," Haydon said; but honest John Bull "swore it was the finest work England had produced." A private gentleman bought it for £600 and the British Institution gave Haydon one hundred guineas as a mark of admiration. His painting-room was thronged with noble lords and literary men; and, after he had returned from a visit to Paris, he was granted the freedom of Plymouth, his native town.

Haydon endeavored to develop a style of painting that was both natural and heroic. He sought to discover the principles of this style by a study of the anatomy of the human body. In 1808, when he was working on *Dentatus*, he was tormented by his incapacity to build an heroic form, like life, yet above life. If I copied nature, he said, my work was mean; and, if I left her, it was mannered. In the antique he found something of what he sought but he desired more of nature than he could find in antique figures. In this crisis, David Wilkie invited him to visit the marbles which Lord Elgin had salvaged from the Parthenon. In the Elgin Marbles, Haydon found the heroic style of art combined with all the essential detail of actual life. He saw that every form of the Theseus was altered by action or repose, that one side of the back was stretched because the shoulder blade was pulled forward, that the other side was compressed because the shoulder blade was pushed close to the spine as he rested on his elbow, and that the belly was flat because the bowels fell into the pelvis as he sat. Haydon reacted to the marbles with the enthusiasm of his vehement temperament. When he returned to his painting-room, he dashed out the "abominable mass" of his *Dentatus* and breathed as if relieved of a nuisance. He secured per-

mission to sketch the marbles; and for three months he sketched from ten to fifteen hours at a time until he had mastered the forms of the marbles and the principles upon which they had been designed. In 1815, he made casts of the Theseus, Illissus, Neptune's Breast, and a host of fragments.

When Lord Elgin offered to sell the marbles to the English nation, a violent controversy arose. Payne Knight and the connoisseurs said that the marbles were Roman of the time of Hadrian; and, driven from this position, they said that, if the marbles were Greek, they were too fragmentary to be of any value. Haydon declared, on the contrary, that the marbles were the finest remains of Greek sculpture and that they would overthrow the old antique ideal which had been established from smooth, regular copies of vivid, realistic Greek originals. Canova, who visited London in 1815, supported Haydon's judgment. The protracted controversy ended in the purchase of the marbles in March 1816. Before the committee appointed by the Government had made its decision, Haydon published, both in *The Examiner* and in *The Champion*, an article *On the Judgment of Connoisseurs being preferred to that of Professional Men*. This article, in the judgment of Haydon and his friends, was the final blow in the victory for the purchase of the Elgin Marbles.

Haydon received "golden opinions" from all sorts of persons, and in particular from the poets who were his ardent friends and steadfast admirers. On December 21, 1815, in the height of the Elgin Marbles controversy, Wordsworth wrote a letter of encouragement to Haydon and enclosed three sonnets, one of which was a personal tribute. Wordsworth's praise lifted Haydon up into the clouds. His soul yearned in gratitude to God, who had fired his soul when he was a boy unconscious of his future greatness. He gave the three sonnets which Wordsworth had sent to him to Hunt, to whom he had introduced Wordsworth in the first half of 1815; and Hunt printed them in *The Examiner* — the second (*How clear, how keen, how marvellously bright*) on January 28, the first (*While not a leaf seems faded; while the fields*) on February 11, and the third (*High is our calling, Friend! — Creative art*) on March 31. Haydon also gave the third sonnet, which was a personal tribute to him, to John Scott, who printed it in *The Champion* on April 1. Leigh Hunt wrote a sonnet to Haydon on September 3, 1816 and published it in *The Examiner* on October 20. He congratulated Haydon on his success as a painter, declaring that he was "fit to be numbered in succession due" with Michael Angelo and Raphael.

Keats also addressed a sonnet to Haydon. He composed it after March 1816, for he alluded to Haydon's victory in the Elgin Marbles controversy. Its tone of impersonal admiration indicates, as Miss Lowell suggested, that he composed it before he met Haydon on November 19. I believe that he composed it at the end of October or at the beginning of November, after he had been introduced into Hunt's coterie, in which Haydon was admired as the victorious champion of the Elgin Marbles. He published it in his *Poems* of 1817, from which I quote it.

#### ADDRESSED TO HAYDON.

Highmindedness, a jealousy for good,  
 A loving-kindness for the great man's fame,  
 Dwells here and there with people of no name,  
 In noisome alley, and in pathless wood:  
 And where we think the truth least understood,  
 Oft may be found a "singleness of aim,"  
 That ought to frighten into hooded shame  
 A money mong'ring, pitiable brood.  
 How glorious this affection for the cause  
 Of stedfast genius, toiling gallantly!  
 What when a stout unbending champion awes  
 Envy, and Malice to their native sty?  
 Unnumber'd souls breathe out a still applause,  
 Proud to behold him in his country's eye.

On Wednesday evening, November 19, Keats and Clarke saw "the glorious Haydon and all his creation" in his painting-room at 41 Great Marlborough Street. When Keats entered the painting-room, we can imagine, he saw the huge canvas of *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem* towering above sketches and casts of the Elgin Marbles. Haydon had been working upon the picture for two years but he would not finish it for four years more. The Samaritan Woman, the Centurion, the Penitent Girl, and her Mother were completed; but the central figure, Christ upon a donkey, was unfinished, and most of the faces and figures in the background had not been begun. In the midst of his sketches and casts and paintings stood Haydon himself, with his bold, pugnacious appearance, his fiery enthusiasm, his flashing imagination, and his racy speech. Keats was stirred to the depths of his being. The next morning he sent a sonnet to Haydon in a letter of emphatic brevity.

20 November 1816.

My dear Sir —

Last evening wrought me up, and I cannot forbear sending you the following.

Great spirits now on earth are sojourning;  
 He of the cloud, the cataract, the lake,

Who on Helvellyn's summit, wide awake,  
 Catches his freshness from Archangel's wing·  
 He of the rose, the violet, the spring,  
 The social smile, the chain for Freedom's sake·  
 And lo' — whose stedfastness would never take  
 A meaner sound than Raphael's whispering  
 And other spirits there are standing apart  
 Upon the forehead of the age to come;  
 These, these will give the world another heart,  
 And other pulses Hear ye not the hum  
 Of mighty workings in some distant Mart?  
 Listen awhile ye nations, and be dumb.

Yours unfeignedly

John Keats —

Removed to 76 Cheapside

Keats described Wordsworth, Hunt, and Haydon as the three great spirits who were sojourning on earth. Haydon was wrought up into a storm of emotion. As on another occasion, he strode around the room, his cheeks full of blood, his heart beating with glorious heat. In an interval of his ecstasy, he wrote an enthusiastic letter to Keats, proposing to send the sonnet to Wordsworth and suggesting that the thirteenth verse end with "mighty workings." Keats, equally impassioned, replied at once.

Thursday afternoon, 20 November 1816.

My dear Sir,

Your letter has filled me with a proud pleasure, and shall be kept by me as a stimulus to exertion — I begin to fix my eye upon one horizon. My feelings entirely fall in with yours in regard to the El[li]psis, and I glory in it. The Idea of your sending it to Wordsworth put me out of breath — you know with what Reverence I would send my Well-wishes to him.

Yours sincerely

John Keats

The first verse of Keats's sonnet,

Great spirits now on earth are sojourning,

was suggested, I believe, by the first verse of one of Wordsworth's sonnets,

Great men have been among us; hands that penned. . . .

The letter in which Keats sent the sonnet to Haydon indicates that they had discussed Wordsworth. From this time on, as we shall see, Haydon influenced Keats's appreciation and imitation of Wordsworth's poetry. On December 31, 1816, he sent Keats's sonnet to Wordsworth.

I copy out [he wrote Wordsworth] a sonnet by a young poet, Keats, addressed to me, but beginning with you I should wish very much to know what you think of it. He promises a great deal, and said in a letter to me, when I said I

should enclose it to you, "The idea of your sending it to Wordsworth puts me out of breath; you know with what reverence I should send my well-wishes to him" He is quite a youth, full of eagerness and enthusiasm, and what greatly recommends him to me, he has a very fine head! . . . I need not say his reverence for you, my dear Sir, is unbounded

Thursday evening, November 20, after he had received the sonnet from Keats, Haydon visited John Hamilton Reynolds and read Keats's sonnet to him. The visit was eminently successful. The next morning Reynolds duplicated Keats's feat and wrote Haydon a sonnet with the following letter.

Friday morning 10 o'Clock

My dear Haydon,

As you are now getting "golden opinions from all sorts of men," it was not fitting that One who is sincerely your Friend should be found wanting. Last night when you left me — I went to my bed — And the Sonnet on the other side absolutely started into my mind. I send it you, because I really *feel* your Genius, and because I know that things of this kind are the dearest rewards of Genius. It is not equal to anything you have yet had, in power, I know; — but it is sincere, and that is a recommendation. Will you, at my desire, send a copy to M<sup>r</sup> Keats, and say to him, how much I was pleased with his

Yours affectionately

J. H. Reynolds<sup>28</sup>

This letter proves that Keats had become acquainted with Reynolds sometime before Friday, November 21, 1816. The date of the beginning of his friendship with Reynolds is an important fact in a study of the genesis of his poetry. It has been believed on the basis of Woodhouse's dating of the sonnet *On an Engraved Gem of Leander* that Keats and Reynolds were friends as early as March 1816. Evidence which is now available, however, proves that Keats met Reynolds for the first time in the home of Leigh Hunt in the latter part of October or in the first part of November 1816. On December 30, 1846, thirty years afterwards, Reynolds wrote Lord Houghton:

My intimacy with Keats commenced I believe at the close of 1816 or early in 1817. I met him at Leigh Hunt's Cottage in the Vale of Health. He then lived in the Poultry and I could, I am sure (but this I will test by the time I see you) point out the very House. . . . He became of age about the time I first saw him.<sup>29</sup>

Benjamin Bailey, who met Keats through Reynolds, supported Reynolds' recollections. On May 7, 1849, thirty-three years afterwards, he wrote Lord Houghton:

It was, I think, about the end of 1816, or the beginning of 1817, that my friend Mr. Reynolds, wrote to me at Oxford respecting Keats, with whom he & his family had just become acquainted.

<sup>28</sup> M. B. Forman, Vol. I, p. 11.

<sup>29</sup> G. L. Marsh, *John Hamilton Reynolds, Poetry and Prose*, London, 1928, pp. 39-40.

The contemporary facts which Reynolds mentioned establish the approximate date on which he met Keats. Keats met Leigh Hunt in the latter part of October, came of age on October 29, and moved his lodgings from the Poultry to 76 Cheapside either on or a day or two before November 18.

John Hamilton Reynolds, born on September 9, 1794, was a little over a year older than Keats. His father, George Reynolds, was a school-teacher who, after teaching in various institutions, became an usher and in May 1817 a master in the writing school of Christ's Hospital. John Hamilton Reynolds entered St. Paul's School, London, on March 6, 1806; and, after he had completed his education, he secured a clerkship in the Amicable Insurance Society. In the records of this Society, his signature appears on declarations as early as July 18, 1810 and as late as April 24, 1816. In 1814 he was a contributor to *The Inquirer, or Literary Miscellany*, a short-lived periodical. From December 1815 to December 1817 he was dramatic critic of *The Champion*, a weekly newspaper edited by John Scott; and he contributed a stream of reviews, articles, and poems to this newspaper in 1816 and 1817.

The evolution of Reynolds' poetry was very similar to that of Keats's. Throughout his life he venerated and imitated Spenser. He was influenced at first by the sentimental and romantic poetry of the eighteenth-century schools of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton and afterwards by the natural poetry of Hunt and Wordsworth. When he met Keats in October or November 1816, he was already, as Harry Buxton Forman observed, a seasoned author. In February 1814 he published *Safie, an Eastern Tale*, an imitation of Byron's oriental romances. He dedicated the romance to Byron, who acknowledged the dedication with words of kindly but conventional encouragement. In August 1814 he published *The Eden of the Imagination* and dedicated it to J. F. M. Dovaston, a lawyer and poetaster of Shrewsbury. In this poem he was influenced by Wordsworth's natural style, which he was induced to study and imitate, it seems, by Hunt's praise of it. In a note on Wordsworth, he said significantly: "For a fine estimate of his genius, see the Notes in Hunt's 'Feast of the Poets.'" In the text of the poem, he praised Byron, Campbell, Wordsworth, Southey, Moore, Scott, Rogers, Crabbe, and Hunt. In 1816 (in the summer, it is probable) he published *The Naid: a Tale with Other Poems* and dedicated it to Benjamin Robert Haydon. He was influenced in these poems almost equally by Wordsworth and Hunt. He published a sonnet *To Wordsworth* in *The Champion* on February 19, 1816, acknowledging Words-



worth's healing power. He sent a copy of *The Naid* to Wordsworth and asked for his criticism of it. Wordsworth took the request seriously and replied frankly.

You do me the honour of asking me to find fault in order that you may profit by my remarks. . . . I will not scruple to say that your poem would have told more upon me, if it had been shorter. . . . Your fancy is too luxuriant, and riots too much upon its own creations. Can you endure to be told by one whom you are so kind as to say you respect that in his judgment your poem would be better without the first 57 lines (not condemned for their own sakes), and without the last 146, which nevertheless have in themselves much to recommend them? . . .

Hunt's influence, aided by Wordsworth's sound but tactless criticism of *The Naid*, caused Reynolds from this time on to mingle his praise of Wordsworth with a good deal of censure. In *The Examiner* for December 1, 1816, Hunt published an article on *Young Poets* in which he said that three young poets, Shelley, Reynolds, and Keats, "appear to us to promise a considerable addition of strength to the new school." He quoted the opening verses of Reynolds' *Naid* and observed:

The author's style is too artificial, though he is evidently an admirer of Mr Wordsworth. Like all young poets too, properly so called, his love of detail is too overwrought and indiscriminate; but still he is a young poet, and only wants a still closer attention to things as opposed to the seduction of words, to realize all that he promises. His nature seems very true and amiable.

Reynolds responded at once to Hunt's praise of his poetry. On December 8, a week later, he published in *The Champion* a sonnet on Hunt's *Story of Rimini*. And Hunt, in return, wrote a sonnet *To John Hamilton Reynolds, On his Lines upon The Story of Rimini*. The style of Reynolds' sonnets is indistinguishable from that of Hunt's sonnets and from that of the sonnets which Keats wrote under Hunt's influence.

Reynolds lacked the force and intensity of original genius but he had a remarkable talent for imitating the style of his poetic masters. In a critical vision in prose, *The Pilgrimage of Living Poets to the Stream of Castaly*, which he published in *The Champion* for April 7, 1816, he admitted: "I am one of those unfortunate youths to whom the Muse has glanced a sparkling of her light,—one of those who pant for distinction, but have not within them that immortal power which alone can command it."

Reynolds was sensitive and proud but honest and generous. He was ambitious to win poetic fame and, in the early part of his friendship with Keats, he had hopes of winning fame in poetry, but he acknowledged Keats's superior genius, and, without showing the least

jealousy, he did everything within his power to promote and to defend Keats's poetic career. On August 3, 1817, a correspondent, who signed himself Pierre, wrote to *The Champion*:

I have seen some lines in your paper, occasionally, signed J H R which have pleased me much. I think that the writer (whoever he is) can furnish something much better than your favorite Mr Keats, whom my perverseness of taste, forbids me to admire.

On August 17 Reynolds published Keats's sonnet *On the Sea* in *The Champion* and observed generously:

The following sonnet is from the pen of Mr Keats. It is quite sufficient, we think, to justify all the praise we have given him, — and to prove to our correspondent Pierre, his superiority over any poetical writer in the *Champion*. — J. H. R. would be the first to acknowledge this himself.

In December 1816, Keats met Shelley in Hunt's cottage on Hampstead Heath. For several years Shelley had admired Hunt as a patriot. On March 2, 1811, he had written Hunt from Oxford to congratulate him on his acquittal from a prosecution for libel. Sometime afterwards Rowland Hunter, the publisher, to whom Shelley submitted a poem, sent him to seek counsel of Hunt. In 1813, when Hunt was imprisoned in Horsemonger Lane Gaol, Shelley made him a "princely offer" of money, which he refused. These early connections of the two poets, however, did not produce an intimate friendship between them.

Hunt's friendship with Shelley was brought about by his article on the young poets, Shelley, Reynolds, and Keats, which he published in *The Examiner* on December 1, 1816. This article was the first public notice of both Shelley and Keats as poets.

Of the first [of these young poets] who came before us [Hunt said], we have, it is true, yet seen only one or two specimens, and these were no sooner sent us than we unfortunately mislaid them; but we shall procure what he has published, and if the rest answer to what we have seen, we shall have no hesitation in announcing him for a very striking and original thinker. His name is Percy Bysshe Shelley, and he is the author of a poetical work entitled *Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude*.

Hunt entered into a correspondence with Shelley, expressing his sympathy and admiration for him and confiding his dire need of money. Shelley responded with his characteristic generosity, sending Hunt £5 and advising him to apply to Lord Byron for £100. He sent Hunt also the manuscript of *The Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* for publication in *The Examiner*. He set out to visit Hunt in Hampstead but stopped on the way with Peacock in Marlow, from which place he wrote him on December 8. Sometime between the 8th and the

14th of December, he visited Hunt in Hampstead. On December 14 he returned to Bath, where he had resided with Mary Godwin since their return to England on September 8; but, on December 15, he received news of the suicide of his wife, Harriet Shelley, and he departed immediately for London. "Leigh Hunt has been with me all day," he wrote Mary Godwin on December 16, "and his delicate and tender attentions to me, his kind speeches of you, have sustained me against the weight of the horror of this incident." In the latter part of December and in January, he was frequently in London to prosecute his suit in chancery for possession of his children by Harriet Shelley and to make arrangements for his marriage to Mary Godwin. At this time and in these matters, Hunt was his constant companion and intimate adviser.

Keats and Shelley saw a great deal of each other in Hunt's cottage in December 1816 and in January and February 1817. Horace Smith, who met Keats and Shelley in December at one of the parties to which Hunt invited his friends to meet Shelley, drew a sympathetic picture of Shelley's appearance and conversation.

He was not in the cottage when I arrived, but I was introduced to another young poet of no common talent — Keats. . . In a short time Shelley was announced, and I beheld a fair, freckled, blue-eyed, light-haired, delicate-looking person, whose countenance was serious and thoughtful; whose stature would have been rather tall had he carried himself upright, whose earnest voice, though never loud, was somewhat unmusical. . . Two or three more friends presently arriving, the discourse, under the inspiration of our facetious host, assumed a playful and bantering character . . . The weather being fine, the whole party sallied forth to stroll upon the Heath, where I attached myself to Shelley, and gradually drawing him apart, enjoyed with him a long and uninterrupted conversation. . . His principal discourse . . . was of Plato, for whose character, writings, and philosophy he expressed an unbounded admiration. . . <sup>30</sup>

"Keats did not take to Shelley as kindly as Shelley did to him," Hunt said years afterwards. In his correspondence Keats referred to Shelley either with constraint or with suspicion. Hunt suggested that "Keats, being a little too sensitive on the score of his origin, felt inclined to see in every man of birth a sort of natural enemy." It is more probable, however, that Keats was repelled by the money which Shelley lavished on the dependents who flocked around him. He was aware doubtless that Shelley gave Hunt £1500 in this period. He may have been offended also because Shelley, who did not approve of the cockney style of poetry, advised him not to publish his poems. He feared too that he would be influenced by the more finished style of Shelley's poetry. In March 1817, when he had re-

<sup>30</sup> Arthur H. Beavan, *James and Horace Smith*, 1899, p. 137.

solved to free himself from Hunt's style, he refused to visit Shelley in Marlow in order that he might pursue his own "unfettered scope." In January 1818, he wrote his brothers that Shelley and Hunt were hurt because he had not sought their advice in the composition of *Endymion*. "From several hints I have had," he said, "they appear much disposed to dissect and anatomize any trip or slip I may have made."

Apart from these accidental circumstances, however, Keats and Shelley were entirely dissimilar in temperament and in mind. Shelley was an elemental spirit whose pulse "beat in mystic sympathy with nature's ebb and flow." He loved to symbolize himself as a bird, a wind, a cloud, or a stream.

The mountaineer,  
Encountering on some dizzy precipice  
That spectral form, deemed that the Spirit of wind  
With lightning eyes, and eager breath, and feet  
Disturbing not the drifted snow, had paused  
In its career.

His sensory system was unevenly developed. His poetic images sprang almost exclusively from visual, auditory, and motor sensations, which are the least sensuous of sensations. Intentionally as well as instinctively, he fled from the world of human life into a world of ideal abstractions, to which his imagination gave ethereal voice and motion. "The imagery which I have employed," he explained in the preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, "will be found, in many instances, to have been drawn from the operations of the human mind, or from those external actions by which they are expressed."

Keats, on the contrary, had an evenly developed sensory system. His poetry is not only rich in line, color, light and shade, and sound, but it is also rich in images of the intimately physical sensations of taste, touch, smell, temperature, and pressure, and in images of the organic sensations, such as hunger and thirst, the most elementary but the most powerful of sensations. His imagery, accordingly, is both comprehensive and sensuous. His poetry, heavy with imagery, and slow of movement, clings to the rich earth of human experience. The poetry of Shelley, light and swift, soars into the ether of intellectual ecstasy.

A similar distinction applies to the intellectual faculties of the two poets. Shelley's speculative faculties were highly developed, but he lacked that practical judgment, that common sense, which

enables a man to understand the world in which he lives and to adjust himself to it. His brilliant but unbalanced mind made his ideas and actions so unlike those of ordinary men that he has been regarded variously as non-human, inhuman, and superhuman. Out of the philosophical systems of Plato, Rousseau, and Godwin he constructed a system of universal reform in religion, politics, economics, etc. His poetry was always ancillary to his Messianic mission. In poetry, he said, his purpose was "to familiarise the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence." Keats, on the contrary, had a well-balanced mind that was as practical as it was speculative. Hunt, who loved Shelley more than he loved Keats, said that Keats "was so far inferior in universality to his great acquaintance, that he could not accompany him in his daedal rounds with nature, and his Archimedean endeavours to move the globe with his own hands." At the time that Keats met Shelley, the youthful impressionability of his mind was growing rapidly into a state of Shakespearean objectivity, which enabled him to see both sides of every subject.

Keats and Shelley, although antipathetic, could not live in close association without exerting some influence upon each other. Shelley had no discernible effect upon Keats's poetic style; for, although he disapproved of the poetic principles which Keats had learned from Hunt, he would not, because of his regard for Hunt, censure these principles. He did advise Keats, however, not to publish his poems. In 1820, speaking of Keats's early poems, he said that they were "written in that bad sort of style which is becoming fashionable among those who think they are imitating Hunt and Wordsworth."

Shelley had an immediate, a striking, but a transient effect upon Keats's ideas. He influenced Keats's religious sentiments and also to some extent Keats's neo-Platonic philosophy. In his relations with Hunt's coterie, he was an iconoclast and a prophet rather than a poet and a critic. He censured vices in religious sects, government, and social institutions and expounded the philosophic principles of Plato, Rousseau, and Godwin. Hunt, who was a sentimental deist, had published articles in censure of certain Christian sects, such as the Methodists, but he had maintained his friendship with Haydon, who was belligerently orthodox, by refraining from discussing religion with him. "We argue always with full hearts on everything but religion and Buonaparte," Haydon wrote on October 27, 1816, "and we have resolved never to talk of these." Shelley, however, broke the truce in religious discussions in Hunt's

coterie. He took an impish, almost a malicious, delight in shocking the sensibilities of the orthodox. In the early part of January 1817, Haydon was invited to meet Shelley at a dinner party.

I came a little after the time [Haydon said], and seated myself in the place kept for me at table, right opposite Shelley himself, as I was told after, for I did not know what hectic, spare, weakly yet intellectual looking creature it was, carving a bit of brocoli or cabbage on his plate as if it had been the substantial wing of a chicken. Hunt and his wife, her sister, old Hill, John Keats, myself and Horace Smith made up the party.

In a few minutes Shelley, in the most feminine and gentlest voice, said "As to that detestable Religion the Christian Religion etc. etc." . . . I looked astounded, but casting a glance round the table easily saw by Hunt's expression of extasy and the Women's simper that I was to be sat at that [evening] *amis et vi*. No reply was made to this sally, we all eat our dinner and when the dessert came and the servant was gone to it we went like Devils. All present were deists but myself, and I felt exactly like a stag at bay and resolved to gore without mercy. Shelley said the Mosaic and Christian dispensations were inconsistent. I swore they were not, and that the Ten Commandments had been the foundation of all the codes of law on earth. Shelley denied it, Hunt backed him, I affirmed, neither one of us using one atom of logic. Shelley said Shakespeare could not have been a Christian because he made the Gaoler say in *Cymbeline* — . . .

I replied, that proved nothing, you might as well argue Shakespeare was in favour of murder because, [when] he makes a murderer, he is ready to murder, as to infer he did not believe in another world or Christianity, because he has put sophistry in the mouth of a gaoler.

I said his own will might be inferred to be his own belief, and there he says, "In Jesus Christ hoping and assuredly believing, I, W. Shakespeare, etc." Hunt and Shelley said that was a mere matter of form. I said theirs was mere matter of inference, and if quotation was argument — I would give two passages to one in my favour. They sneered and I at once quoted . . .

Neither Smith, Keats or Hill said a word; the Women seemed delighted to be palliated in the infidelity they had come to; and Shelley, Hunt, and S. kept at it — till, finding I was a match for all their arguments, they became personal, and so did I. We said nasty things to each other, and when I retired to the other room for a moment I overheard them say, "Haydon is fierce." "Yes," said Hunt; "the question always irritates him." As his Wife and Sister were dressing to go, Hunt said to me with a look of nervous fear, "Are these creatures to be d—ned, Haydon?" Good Heaven! what a morbid view of Christianity. . . .

After this dinner I made up my mind to subject myself no more to the chance of these discussions, but gradually to withdraw from the whole party. [H. B. Forman's transcript from Haydon's Journals, Library Edition, Vol. IV, pp. 349-351.]

Haydon's story of his argument with Shelley upon the subject of Christianity is highly colored and strongly biased but it is doubtless true to fact. Severn, who met Shelley in this period, had a similar argument with him.

Shelley, in our first interview, went out of his way to attack me on my Christian creed. He repeated to Leigh Hunt the plan of a poem he was about to write, being a comparison of the Blessed Saviour with a mountebank, whose tricks he identified with the miracles. I was shocked and disturbed, and breaking in upon his offensive detail, I exclaimed, "That the fact of the greatest men having been Christians during the Christian period placed the religion far above such low ridicule." Shelley immediately denied this fact, and we at once began enumerating on our fingers the great men who were Christians, and the few who were not. When we got to Shakespeare he attempted to deny the great poet's belief, and quoted the sailor [gaoler?] in "Measure for Measure." My counter quotations were from utterances of Portia, Hamlet, Isabella, and numerous others; so that Leigh Hunt and Keats declared I had the best of the argument — whereupon Shelley declared that he would study the subject and write an essay upon it.<sup>31</sup>

Haydon said that Keats, when he first knew him, "had a tending to religion," but that "Leigh Hunt soon forced it from his mind." Severn, speaking of *Adonais*, the elegy which Shelley wrote on the death of Keats, said that Shelley was "one of those friends who had most helped to take away the means of hope from Keats, when despair was so shortly to kill him." "Shelley, in his poem, is wholly unconscious of what I mean," Severn added, "nor do I think even now after thirty-nine years are there many who would comprehend what I feel."<sup>31</sup>

We can solve the problem of the change in Keats's attitude to Christianity by studying the religious element in his poems in the light of the testimony of Haydon and Severn. Keats was reared in the liberal, tolerant, but Christian environment of the Clarke School. In his early poems — the reflective lyric *On Death*, the sonnet *To Chatterton*, and the sonnet in memory of his grandmother — he expressed conventional Christian concepts and symbols. His friendship with Hunt in November 1816, which was a pure "brotherhood in song," wrought no change in his religious opinions. The sonnet *On leaving some Friends at an early Hour*, which he composed upon leaving Hunt's cottage one evening in November, has a definite Christian coloring. Hunt and Haydon, we know, had agreed not to discuss religion with each other. When Shelley became a member of Hunt's coterie in the second week in December, he stirred up a bitter religious controversy. Hunt, who was swayed by Shelley in all matters, took part in the concerted assault upon Haydon's Christian convictions at the dinner party in the early part of January 1817. In this period (in December, I conjecture) Hunt wrote two sonnets *To Percy Shelley on the Degrading Notions of Deity*. In the octave of the first sonnet, he said:

<sup>31</sup> William Sharp, *Life and Letters of Joseph Severn*, pp. 116-117

What wonder, Percy, that with jealous rage  
 Men should defame the kindly and the wise,  
 When in the midst of the all-beauteous skies,  
 And all this lovely world, that should engage  
 Their mutual search for the old golden age,  
 They seat a phantom, swelled into grim size  
 Out of their own passions and bigotries,  
 And then, for fear, proclaim it meek and sage!

In December Keats was inspired by Shelley and Hunt with a hostility to the beliefs and practices of Christian sects. On Sunday evening, December 22, he was sitting in his lodgings with his brothers and Henry Stephens. Irritated by the melancholy tolling of church bells, he composed an *ex tempore* sonnet:

WRITTEN IN DISGUST OF VULGAR SUPERSTITION.

The church bells toll a melancholy round,  
 Calling the people to some other prayers,  
 Some other gloominess, more dreadful cares,  
 More hearkening to the sermon's horrid sound.  
 Surely the mind of man is closely bound  
 In some black spell, seeing that each one tears  
 Himself from fireside joys, and Lydian airs,  
 And converse high of those with glory crown'd.  
 Still, still they toll, and I should feel a damp, —  
 A chill as from a tomb, did I not know  
 That they are dying like an outburmt lamp;  
 That 'tis their sighing, wailing ere they go  
 Into oblivion; — that fresh flowers will grow,  
 And many glories of immortal stamp.

I have quoted this sonnet from Harry Buxton Forman's copy of two identical transcripts in the copy-books of Tom Keats and Henry Stephens. Tom Keats dated it "Sunday Evening, Dec. 24, 1816"; but he confused the day of the month, for, as Miss Lowell pointed out, Sunday was the 22nd instead of the 24th of December. Stephens said that the sonnet was "written by J. K. in 15 minutes."

The thought of the sonnet — the contrast between the ugly bigotry of Christian sects and the beauty of nature, the fireside, and literature — is similar to the thought of the two sonnets which Hunt wrote to Shelley. "Gloominess" and "fireside joys" belong to Hunt's style. "Lydian airs" was a reminiscence of Milton's *L'Allegro* and "converse high of those with glory crown'd" was a reminiscence of Thomson's *Winter* (v. 432), "high converse with the mighty dead." In his *ex tempore* poems, as Miss Lowell observed, Keats attained sometimes a simple, direct forcefulness which is rarely found in his finished poems.



In December Keats composed a sonnet *To Kosciusko*, the Polish patriot who had fought for liberty on the battlefields of Europe and America. In his description of Hunt's study in *Sleep and Poetry*, he described a bust of Kosciusko, his face "worn by horrid suffrance — mightily forlorn." He published the sonnet in *The Examiner* for February 16, 1817 and dated it "Dec. 1816." Hunt had also addressed a sonnet *To Kosciusko Who Took Part Neither with Bonaparte in the Height of his Power, nor with the Allies in the Height of Theirs*.

In December, it is probable, Keats composed the sonnet *Happy is England! I could be content*, which he published in his *Poems* of 1817. In the octave he compared the English clime with the Italian and in the sestet the "artless daughters of England" with Italian "beauties of deeper glance." The sonnet represents the beginning of that interest in Italy and in Italian romance which induced Keats to study Dante, Boccaccio, and Ariosto and to plan with Reynolds, in the spring of 1818, to compose a series of romances from Boccaccio. His interest in Italy was inspired by Hunt, who was a leader in the revival of the study of Italian poetry, and especially of Italian romance, in England in the nineteenth century. In notes to *The Feast of the Poets*, editions of 1814 and 1815, Hunt exhorted English poets to go to Italy rather than to France for their poetic models. He followed his own advice by drawing the matter of his *Story of Rimini* from Dante and the medley qualities of the style from Pulci, Boiardo, and Ariosto. He was attracted to Italian poetry by his love for the English poets of the Renaissance, whom he called the Italian school of poets. In the epistle which he wrote *To the Right Honourable Lord Byron, on his Departure for Italy and Greece* (published in *The Examiner* for April 28, 1816), he praised Italy as the initiator of the Renaissance, "the Queen of Europe's second spring." The "four great masters of our song," he said, "turned to Italy for added light":

Milton for half his style, Chaucer for tales,  
Spenser for flowers to fill his isles and vales,  
And Shakespeare's self for frames already done  
To build his everlasting piles upon.

Hunt's association with Keats and Shelley in December 1816 was intimate, involved, and inspiring. At the end of December, he entertained Shelley and Mary Godwin on the eve of their marriage. On December 29, they left Hampstead and went to London, where they were married on December 30. On the evening of December 30, Keats and Clarke visited Hunt; and Keats and Hunt composed, in friendly rivalry, their sonnets *On the Grasshopper and Cricket*.

The occasion that recurs with the liveliest interest [Clarke said] was one evening when — some observations having been made upon the character, habits, and pleasant associations with that reverend denizen of the hearth, the cheerful little grasshopper of the fireside — Hunt proposed to Keats the challenge of writing then, and there, and to time, a sonnet "On the Grasshopper and Cricket." No one was present but myself, and they accordingly set to. I, apart, with a book at the end of the sofa, could not avoid furtive glances every now and then at the emulants. I cannot say how long the trial lasted. I was not proposed umpire; and had no stop-watch for the occasion. The time, however, was short for such a performance, and Keats won as to time. But the event of the after-scrutiny was one of many such occurrences which have riveted the memory of Leigh Hunt in my affectionate regard and admiration for unaffected generosity and perfectly unpretentious encouragement. His sincere look of pleasure at the first line —

The poetry of earth is never dead

"Such a prosperous opening!" he said; and when he came to the tenth and eleventh lines: —

On a lone winter evening, *when the frost*  
*Has wrought a silence* —

"Ah! that's perfect! Bravo Keats!" And then he went on in a dilation upon the dumbness of Nature during the season's suspension and torpidity. With all the kind and gratifying things that were said to him, Keats protested to me, as we were afterwards walking home, that he preferred Hunt's treatment of the subject to his own. As neighbour Dogberry would have rejoined, "'Fore God, they are both in a tale!"

Keats published the sonnet *On the Grasshopper and Cricket* in his *Poems* of 1817 and dated it "December 30, 1816." It is the second of the two good sonnets which were inspired by his association with Hunt in this period.

*Sleep and Poetry* and *I stood tip-toe upon a little hill*, the two long poems which Keats completed by the end of December 1816, represent the height of Hunt's influence upon his poetry. In the one he made his most complete formulation of Hunt's poetic principles and in the other he made his most perfect imitation of Hunt's descriptive style.

*Sleep and Poetry* falls into three main divisions: the first (vv. 1-162) is a vision of the inspiration, the materials, and the realms of poetry; the second (vv. 162-312) is a critical survey of the schools of English poetry and a statement of the great end of poetry; and the third (vv. 312-404), a description of Hunt's cottage on Hampstead Heath, is a tribute to the master from whom he had learned his conception of poetry.

Keats began the poem with a definition of sleep in a series of rhetorical questions, a stylistic device which he had employed in his

juvenile poems. Sleep, he said, is gentle, soothing, serene, and full of visions. His conception of the relationship of sleep and poetry, which he thought out clearly in *Endymion*, is somewhat confused and vague in this poem. He conceived of sleep, if we may clarify his conception, as a state of being in which a poet sees visions. He took the motto of the poem from *The Floure and the Leafe*, a pseudo-Chaucerian poem, in which the poet, who falls asleep, has a dream which is the substance of the poem. He himself intuited this poem as he lay in a waking trance on the little couch in Hunt's study one night in November.

Passing from sleep to poesy, Keats invoked her to yield him from her sanctuary scenes of natural beauty which would stimulate him into a state of vision — a bowery nook, in which he might copy many a lovely saying about the leaves and the flowers; a shade keeping silence around a sleeping maid; a fireside, in which he might discern vistas of solemn beauty; an enchanted grot; and a green hill overspread with a chequered dress of flowers. These scenes, we observe, are the settings of various poems which he had already composed in this period. If he can bear these overwhelming sweets, he continued, they will bring him visions of all places. Then like a strong giant he will seize the events of the wide world and grow wings to find out an immortality.

At this point his vision of attaining an immortality in poetry was checked by the thought of the mutability, the evanescence, of life:

Stop and consider! life is but a day;  
A fragile dew-drop on its perilous way  
From a tree's summit; a poor Indian's sleep  
While his boat hastens to the monstrous steep  
Of Montmorenci. Why so sad a moan?  
Life is the rose's hope while yet unblown;  
The reading of an ever-changing tale;  
The light uplifting of a maiden's veil;  
A pigeon tumbling in clear summer air;  
A laughing school-boy, without grief or care,  
Riding the springy branches of an elm.

Like the poets of the Renaissance, Keats had a keen perception of beauty and, as a consequence, an equally keen perception of the mutability of beauty. He remembered that lovely lay in the Bower of Bliss in *The Faerie Queene* in which the life of man is likened to that of the rose:

Ah! see, who so fayre thing doest faine to see,  
In springing flowre the image of thy day. . . .

So passeth, in the passing of a day,  
Of mortall life the leafe, the bud, the flowre,  
Ne more doth florish after first decay. . . .

He objected, however, to the sadness which Spenser had felt at the mutability of life. "Why so sad a moan?" he asked in his joyous, high-reaching youth "Life is the rose's hope while yet unblown; The reading of an ever-changing tale." In later poems, after he had suffered from the mutability of life, he felt the poignant pathos of beauty that must die.

With a boy's conception of time, he cried:

O for ten years, that I may overwhelm  
Myself in poesy; so I may do the deed  
That my own soul has to itself decreed  
Then will I pass the countries that I see  
In long perspective, and continually  
Taste their pure fountains. . . .

The first realm of poetry which he would pass is the poetry of nature, which he had learned to appreciate through Hunt and Wordsworth

First the realm I'll pass  
Of Flora, and old Pan: sleep in the grass,  
Feed upon apples red, and strawberries,  
And choose each pleasure that my fancy sees;  
Catch the white-handed nymphs in shady places,  
To woo sweet kisses from averted faces, —  
Play with their fingers, touch their shoulders white  
Into a pretty shrinking with a bite  
As hard as lips can make it: till agreed,  
A lovely tale of human life we'll read. . . .

In this fanciful and artificial description of a pastoral landscape, this realm of Flora and Pan in which he sported with nymphs in amorous play, Keats followed the Arcadian tradition of nature poetry. He had been reading, as we have seen, the pastoral poetry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries — the sixth book of *The Faerie Queene*, Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, Drayton's pastoral poems, Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, and Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals*. His realm of Flora and Pan was strongly influenced by a descriptive passage in Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals* (Book 2, Song 3, vv. 748 *et seq.*). He was impressed by this passage, for he quoted three verses from it as the motto for his epistles in his *Poems* of 1817.

The second realm of poetry which Keats would pass is the poetry of the human heart.

And can I ever bid these joys farewell?  
 Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life,  
 Where I may find the agonies, the strife  
 Of human hearts: for lo! I see afar,  
 O'er sailing the blue cragginess, a car  
 And steeds with streamy manes — the charioteer  
 Looks out upon the winds with glorious fear:

. . . . .  
 The charioteer with wond'rous gesture talks  
 To the trees and mountains; and there soon appear  
 Shapes of delight, of mystery, and fear,  
 Passing along before a dusky space  
 Made by some mighty oaks: as they would chase  
 Some ever-fleeting music on they sweep.  
 Lo! how they murmur, laugh, and smile, and weep:

. . . . .  
 Yes, thousands in a thousand different ways  
 Flit onward —

. . . . .  
 Most awfully intent  
 The driver of those steeds is forward bent,  
 And seems to listen: O that I might know  
 All that he writes with such a hurrying glow.

These two realms of poetry, comprising successive stages of a poet's life, parallel superficially the second and third stages of the natural education which Wordsworth defined in *Tintern Abbey*. They have in themselves, however, little that is Wordsworthian. Keats adapted, indeed, Hunt's fusion of Wordsworth's natural poetry with the Arcadian pastoral conventions of the seventeenth-century Spenserians. He was too immature, too inexperienced, and too much blinded by Hunt's philosophy of optimism to understand and to feel the agonies of the human heart. A little later in the poem, as we shall see, he, like Hunt, censured Wordsworth for morbid realism.

Keats's description of the realms of poetry is as immature in art as in thought. It is rich in imaginative matter but it is diffuse and formless. The symbol of the charioteer and his steeds as the imagination and its energies is the most vivid and significant element. The source of Keats's conception of the imagination is suggested in a comment that Hunt made upon *Sleep and Poetry* in his review of the *Poems* of 1817 in *The Examiner* for July 13, 1817. "It . . . is a striking specimen of the restlessness of the young poetical appetite, obtaining its food by the very desire of it, and glancing for fit subjects of creation 'from earth to heaven.'" Keats's conception

of the imagination reminded Hunt of Shakespeare's famous definition of the imagination in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (V i. 12-17):

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.

Keats symbolized the poet's imagination, as defined by Shakespeare, as a charioteer, who looks out upon the winds with glorious fear and with wondrous gesture talks to the trees and mountains and embodies things unknown into shapes of delight and mystery and fear. The symbol of the charioteer and his steeds is the most striking example of the influence of Keats and Shelley upon each other. The ultimate source<sup>32</sup> of the symbol is Plato's *Phaedrus*, in which the charioteer and his two steeds represent the three divisions of the human soul — the rational, the sensible, and the vegetable. Keats never read Plato's dialogues, but he heard Shelley discuss Plato. Horace Smith said, we remember, that, when he met Shelley and Keats in Hunt's cottage, Shelley's "principal discourse . . . was of Plato, for whose character, writings, and philosophy he expressed an unbounded admiration." Shelley, I conjecture, described Plato's great symbol of the charioteer and his steeds and Keats, impressed by it, employed it in *Sleep and Poetry*. Shelley, in turn, impressed by Keats's use of the symbol, employed it in his *Prometheus Unbound* (II. iv. 130-40). His diction, which is remarkably like Keats's, proves that he was influenced by Keats.

I see cars drawn by rainbow-wingèd steeds  
Which trample the dim winds: in each there stands  
A wild-eyed charioteer urging their flight.  
Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there,  
And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars:  
Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink  
With eager lips the wind of their own speed,  
As if the thing they loved fled on before,  
And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks  
Stream like a comet's flashing hair: they all  
Sweep onward.

Keats brought the first part of the poem, which is an imaginative vision, to a clear and distinct end:

<sup>32</sup> The symbol of the chariot occurs also in Shelley's early poem *Queen Mab* (I. vv. 59 *et seq.*) but the imagery is different. Compare also *The Daemon of the World* (vv. 48 *et seq.*).

The visions all are fled — the car is fled  
 Into the light of heaven, and in their stead  
 A sense of real things comes doubly strong,  
 And, like a muddy stream, would bear along  
 My soul to nothingness: but I will strive  
 Against all doubtings, and will keep alive  
 The thought of that same chariot, and the strange  
 Journey it went.

He was already conscious, as in later poems such as *Endymion* and the *Ode to a Nightingale*, of the aftermath of poetic inspiration — that feeling of nothingness after he had returned from a flight of his imagination to a sense of real things.

The second part of the poem is a critical survey of the schools of English poetry. Keats had learned from Hunt that English poetry is divided into three schools — the Italian school, which began with Chaucer and ended with Milton; the French school, which began with Dryden and ended with Erasmus Darwin; and the new school, which began with Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, and Lamb. Keats described the Italian school, the school of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, as follows:

Is there so small a range  
 In the present strength of manhood, that the high  
 Imagination cannot freely fly  
 As she was wont of old? prepare her steeds,  
 Paw up against the light, and do strange deeds  
 Upon the clouds? . . .

Here her altar shone,  
 E'en in this isle; and who could paragon  
 The fervid choir that lifted up a noise  
 Of harmony, to where it aye will poise  
 Its mighty self of convoluting sound,  
 Huge as a planet, and like that roll round,  
 Eternally around a dizzy void?  
 Ay, in those days the Muses were nigh cloy'd  
 With honors; nor had any other care  
 Than to sing out and sooth their wavy hair.

Keats was born, reared, and educated in an atmosphere of veneration for Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. He had been inspired to be a poet by reading Spenser with Charles Cowden Clarke; and he had learned the art of poetic composition from the eighteenth-century imitators of Spenser and Milton. After he came to London in October 1815, he rejected the eighteenth-century imitators of Spenser and Milton, read the seventeenth-century Spenserians, and became a member of Hunt's new school of Spenser. Like Hunt, he

regarded the poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as poets of imagination, passion, and nature. In this period, following Hunt, he read and admired these great poets but he did not imitate them literally. "We must study where Shakespeare studied," Hunt said, "— in the fields, in the heavens,— in the heart and fortunes of man; — and he, and the other great poets, should be our reading out of school-hours."

Keats censured the French school, the school of Pope, as follows:

Could all this be forgotten? Yes, a scism  
Nurtured by foppery and barbarism,  
Made great Apollo blush for this his land  
Men were thought wise who could not understand  
His glories: with a puling infant's force  
They sway'd about upon a rocking horse,  
And thought it Pegasus Ah dismal soul'd!  
The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll'd  
Its gathering waves — ye felt it not. The blue  
Bared its eternal bosom, and the dew  
Of summer nights collected still to make  
The morning precious: beauty was awake!  
Why were ye not awake? But ye were dead  
To things ye knew not of, — were closely wed  
To musty laws lined out with wretched rule  
And compass vile: so that ye taught a school  
Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit,  
Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,  
Their verses tallied. Easy was the task:  
A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask  
Of Poesy. Ill-fated, impious race!  
That blasphemed the bright Lyrist to his face,  
And did not know it, — no, they went about,  
Holding a poor, decrepid standard out  
Mark'd with most flimsy mottos, and in large  
The name of one Boileau!

Keats was influenced in some measure by Wordsworth's censure of eighteenth-century poetry. The diction of the verse "The blue Bared its eternal bosom" was a reminiscence of that of "The sea that bares its bosom to the moon," a verse in Wordsworth's sonnet *The world is too much with us*.

Keats was influenced to a much greater extent, however, by Hunt's development of Wordsworth's censure of eighteenth-century poetry. He learned Hunt's critical principles from his conversation as well as from his writings, but we can study these principles only in his writings. In his review of Keats's *Poems* of 1817, Hunt described the French school as follows:



The school which existed till lately since the restoration of Charles the 2d, was rather a school of wit and ethics in verse, than any thing else; nor was the verse, with the exception of Dryden's, of the best order. The authors, it is true, are to be held in great honour. Great wit there certainly was, excellent satire, excellent sense, pithy sayings; and Pope distilled as much real poetry as could be got from the drawing-room world in which the art then lived, — from the flowers and luxuries of artificial life, — into that exquisite little toilet-bottle of essence, the *Rape of the Lock*. But there was little imagination, of a higher order, no intense feeling of nature, no sentiment, no real music or variety.

The rich and enchanted ground of real poetry, fertile with all that English succulence could produce, bright with all that Italian sunshine could lend, and haunted with exquisite humanities, had become invisible to mortal eyes like the garden of Eden: —

And from that time those Graces were not found.

In the notes to *The Feast of the Poets*, Hunt denied that he was one of those who affected to regard Pope as no poet. He admitted that there were fancy and feeling in the *Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady* and in *Eloisa to Abelard*. He censured, in particular, the "smooth but unartistical versification" of Pope which had "spell-bound" him in his youth. He said that Pope's verses have the uniformity but lack the variety of true harmony. He quoted eighteen verses from *The Rape of the Lock*, thirteen of which in succession have their medial pause at the fourth syllable.

I do not hesitate to say [he observed in the preface to *The Story of Rimini*] that Pope and the French school of versification have known the least on the subject, of any poets perhaps that ever wrote. They have mistaken mere smoothness for harmony; and, in fact, wrote as they did, because their ears were only sensible of a marked and uniform regularity. One of the most successful of Pope's imitators, Dr. Johnson, was confessedly insensible to musick.

The successors of Pope, he said in the notes to *The Feast of the Poets*, "have found the style of too easy and accommodating a description to part with it." We have had enough of poets who "write smoothly" and "copy one another everlastingly" he said in the introductory essay in the Round Table in *The Examiner*; let us have poets who go to nature, "the fountain-head of inspiration, where the stream wept and sparkled away at its pleasure, and not where it was cut out into artificial channels, and sent smoothing up, pert and monotonous, through a set of mechanical pipes and eternally repeated images." He suggested that examples of poetic harmony from the poetry of Spenser, Milton, and Dryden "might lead the poets of the present age to that proper mixture of sweetness and

strength, — of modern finish and ancient variety, — from which Pope and his rhyming facilities have so long withheld us."

Of all the poets and critics of the new school, Keats made the most apt description of the heroic couplet of the school of Pope:

with a puling infant's force  
They sway'd about upon a rocking horse,  
And thought it Pegasus

Hunt, in *The Feast of the Poets*, called Pope's couplets "cuckoo song verses, half up and half down," and compared their rhythm to that of a see-saw which has a light person on one end and a heavy person on the other. The same metaphor which Keats used is found in an essay which Hazlitt wrote for *The Round Table* in *The Examiner*. Discussing Milton's versification, Hazlitt remarked: "Dr. Johnson and Pope would have converted his vaulting Pegasus into a rocking-horse." In Hunt's *Autobiography* there is an intriguing suggestion of the source of this metaphor of the rocking-horse. In the house which Hunt occupied in Edgeware Road, after he had been released from prison in February 1815, "was a magnificent rocking-horse," he said, "which a friend had given my little boy; and Lord Byron, with a childish glee becoming a poet, would ride upon it. Ah! why did he ever ride his Pegasus, to less advantage?" This was doubtless a stock anecdote in Hunt's coterie.

Hunt approved of Keats's censure of the French school of poetry, for he had inspired it. In a discussion of *Sleep and Poetry* in his review of the *Poems*, he said:

Nor do we like it the less for an impatient, and as it may be thought by some, irreverent assault upon the late French school of criticism and monotony, which has held poetry chained long enough to render it somewhat indignant when it has got free.

Keats's assault upon the school of Pope, together with his radical politics and his friendship with Hunt, provoked the abuse and ridicule which the English and Scotch reviewers heaped upon his irreverent head.

After censuring the French school of poetry, Keats alluded to the romantic poets of the eighteenth century who had restored to English poetry a glimmer of natural beauty. Addressing Apollo and the Muses, he said:

O ye whose charge  
It is to hover round our pleasant hills!  
Whose congregated majesty so fills  
My boundly reverence, that I cannot trace  
Your hallowed names, in this unholy place,

So near those common folk; did not their shames  
 Affright you? Did our old lamenting Thames  
 Delight you? Did ye never cluster round  
 Delicious Avon, with a mournful sound,  
 And weep? Or did ye wholly bid adieu  
 To regions where no more the laurel grew?  
 Or did ye stay to give a welcoming  
 To some lone spirits who could proudly sing  
 Their youth away, and die? 'Twas even so: . . .

It is significant that Chatterton, the lone spirit who sang his youth away and died, is the only poet of the eighteenth century to whom Keats alluded definitely.

Finally Keats hailed the advent of the new school, the school of Wordsworth:

But let me think away those times of woe:  
 Now 'tis a fairer season; ye have breathed  
 Rich benedictions o'er us, ye have wreathed  
 Fresh garlands: for sweet music has been heard  
 In many places; — some has been upstirr'd  
 From out its crystal dwelling in a lake,  
 By a swan's ebon bill, from a thick brake,  
 Nested and quiet in a valley mild,  
 Bubbles a pipe, fine sounds are floating wild  
 About the earth: happy are ye and glad.

In his article on Shelley, Reynolds, and Keats in *The Examiner* for December 1, Hunt said:

Many of our readers . . . have perhaps observed for themselves, that there has been a new school of poetry rising of late, which promises to extinguish the French one that has prevailed among us since the time of Charles the 2d. It began with something excessive, like most revolutions, but this gradually wore away; and an evident aspiration after real nature and original fancy remained, which called to mind the finer times of the English Muse. In fact it is wrong to call it a new school, and still more so to represent it as one of innovation, its only object being to restore the same love of Nature, and of *thinking* instead of mere *talking*, which formerly rendered us real poets, and not merely versifying wits, and bead-rollers of couplets.

Hunt interpreted the new, natural style of poetry which Wordsworth introduced, as we have seen, in the notes to *The Feast of the Poets*. In his review of Keats's *Poems*, however, he related the origin of this natural style in the informal manner in which he conversed with Keats. Like Keats, whom he influenced, he gave little credit to eighteenth-century romantic poets in his story of the development of this style.

Even the writers who gave evidences meanwhile of a truer poetical faculty, Gray, Thomson, Akenside, and Collins himself, were content with a great deal of second-hand workmanship, and with false styles made up of other languages and a certain kind of inverted cant. It has been thought that Cowper was the first poet who re-opened the true way to nature and a natural style, but we hold this to be a mistake. . . . Cowper's style is for the most part as inverted and artificial as that of the others . . .

It was the Lake Poets in our opinion (however grudgingly we say it, on some accounts) that were the first to revive a true taste for nature; and like most Revolutionists, especially of the cast which they have since turned out to be, they went to an extreme, calculated rather at first to make the readers of poetry disgusted with originality and adhere with contempt and resentment to their magazine common-places. . . .

After mentioning the contributions of Southey, Coleridge, and Lamb to the new, natural style of poetry, Hunt concluded:

But it is Mr. Wordsworth who has advanced it the most, and who in spite of some morbidities as well as mistaken theories in other respects, has opened upon us a fund of thinking and imagination, that ranks him as the successor of the true and abundant poets of the older time.

In the notes to *The Feast of the Poets*, as we have already observed, Hunt accepted Wordsworth's philosophy of natural poetry but censured his application of it. He said that Wordsworth, in some of his poems, expressed the diseased instead of the healthy "primary affections" of the human heart. Keats, like Hunt, censured Wordsworth's morbid naturalism:

These things are doubtless: yet in truth we've had  
Strange thunders from the potency of song;  
Mingled indeed with what is sweet and strong,  
From majesty: but in clear truth the themes  
Are ugly clubs, the Poets Polyphemes  
Disturbing the grand sea. A drainless shower  
Of light is poesy; 'tis the supreme of power;  
'Tis might half slumb'ring on its own right arm.  
The very archings of her eye-lids charm  
A thousand willing agents to obey,  
And still she governs with the mildest sway:  
But strength alone though of the Muses born  
Is like a fallen angel: trees uptorn,  
Darkness, and worms, and shrouds, and sepulchres  
Delight it; for it feeds upon the burrs,  
And thorns of life; forgetting the great end  
Of poesy, that it should be a friend  
To sooth the cares, and lift the thoughts of man.

Hunt, in his review of Keats's *Poems*, commented with approval upon Keats's censure of the morbidity of Wordsworth's poetry:

Mr. Keats takes an opportunity, though with very different feelings towards the school than he has exhibited towards the one above-mentioned [the French school], to object to the morbidity that taints the productions of the Lake Poets. They might answer perhaps, generally, that they chuse to grapple with what is unavoidable, rather than pretend to be blind to it; but the more smiling Muse may reply, that half of the evils alluded to are produced by brooding over them; and that it is much better to strike at as many *causes* of the rest as possible, than to pretend to be satisfied with them in the midst of the most evident dissatisfaction.

Keats's theory of the function of poetry,  
   that it should be a friend  
 To sooth the cares, and lift the thoughts of man,  
 and that  
   they shall be accounted poet kings  
   Who simply tell the most heart-easing things,

is a restatement of Hunt's theory, a theory which sprang out of his philosophy of optimism. In the 1815 version of *The Feast of the Poets*, Hunt said:

For poets, earth's heav'n-linking spirits, were born,  
 What they can to amend — what they can't, to adorn . . .

And, at the beginning of the fourth canto of *The Story of Rimini*, he defined the function of poetry,

  the poet's task divine  
 Of making tears themselves look up and shine,  
 And turning to a charm the sorrow past. . . .

Keats regarded his statement of the function of poetry as the climax of his poem. To those who might say that he had spoken presumptuously in his criticism of the schools of poetry, he replied:

What though I am not wealthy in the dower  
 Of spanning wisdom; though I do not know  
 The shiftings of the mighty winds that blow  
 Hither and thither all the changing thoughts  
 Of man: though no great minist'ring reason sorts  
 Out the dark mysteries of human souls  
 To clear conceiving: yet there ever rolls  
 A vast idea before me, and I glean  
 Therefrom my liberty, thence too I've seen  
 The end and aim of Poesy. . . .

*I stood tip-toe upon a little hill* was suggested to Keats, Leigh Hunt<sup>33</sup> said, "by a delightful summer-day, as he stood beside the gate that leads from the Battery on Hampstead Heath into a field

<sup>33</sup> Leigh Hunt, *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries*.

by Caen Wood." When the poem was begun, we do not know; but if any part of it was composed in the summer of 1816, that part was thoroughly revised in November and December. Its style is as much a development from that of the epistles to George Keats and Charles Cowden Clarke, which were composed in August and September, as their style is a development from that of *An Induction* and *Calidore*, which were composed in the spring. The one characteristic which indicates that a first draft of a part of the poem might have been composed in the summer is the mingling of verses of six syllables in the pattern of heroic couplets, a device which is found in *An Induction* and *Calidore* but which is not found in the epistles to George Keats and Charles Cowden Clarke and in *Sleep and Poetry*.

Keats completed the poem on December 18, 1816. He wrote Clarke on December 17: "I have done little to Endymion lately — I hope to finish it in one more attack —" He did complete the poem in one more attack on the following day; for a fragment of the original autograph manuscript, containing the last twelve verses, is dated "Dec. 18." This fragment of the manuscript was given by Clarke to James Lamb of Paisley; and it was described and offered for sale by John Grant, bookseller of Edinburgh, in May 1933. Haydon mentioned the poem in a letter to Wordsworth on December 31, 1816. "He is now writing a longer sort of poem, of 'Diana and Endymion,' to publish with his smaller productions, and will send you a copy as soon as it is out." Keats at first called the poem "Endymion," because it told the origin of the myth of Endymion and Phoebe; but he published it without title in his *Poems* of 1817, for he decided to compose a long romance upon this myth.

In the opening verses, Keats described the scene on Hampstead Heath which inspired the poem:

I stood tip-toe upon a little hill,  
The air was cooling, and so very still,  
That the sweet buds which with a modest pride  
Pull droopingly, in slanting curve aside,  
Their scanty leaved, and finely tapering stems,  
Had not yet lost those starry diadems  
Caught from the early sobbing of the morn  
The clouds were pure and white as flocks new shorn,  
And fresh from the clear brook, sweetly they slept  
On the blue fields of heaven, and then there crept  
A little noiseless noise among the leaves,  
Born of the very sigh that silence heaves:  
For not the faintest motion could be seen  
Of all the shades that slanted o'er the green.

Keats described this scene in the style of Hunt's description of

the garden in *The Story of Rimini*, from which indeed he extracted the motto of his poem,

Places of nestling green for Poets made.

In this description, as Hazlitt would say, there is a profusion of fresh, sparkling images, which are vivid but redundant. The details are presented through the eye rather than through the mind. The images evoke a mood of delight but they do not suggest the mysteries of human fate or the principles of human action. As Keats described this scene in a fresh and natural style, images from poetry which he had read stole into his mind with a pleasing chime. The first verse, "I stood tip-toe upon a little hill," reminds me of a verse in *Romeo and Juliet* (III. v. 9-10), "jocund day Stands tip-toe on the misty mountain tops." And the infelicitous "sobbing of the morn" may have been suggested by the more felicitous "sobbing breezes" of Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*.

After describing the scene from the little hill, Keats plucked a "posey of luxuries," which, in cockney style, he called "bright, milky, soft, and rosy"—a "bush of May flowers," a "lush laburnum," a "filbert hedge," "clumps of woodbine," the "frequent chequer of a youngling tree," a "spring-head of clear waters," "ardent marigolds," a "streamlet" in which he might watch "Nature's gentle doings," and a "tuft of evening primroses." This "posey of luxuries" he plucked out of his memory rather than from the scene on Hampstead Heath. Take the following passage as an example:

Linger awhile upon some bending planks  
That lean against a streamlet's rushy banks,  
And watch intently Nature's gentle doings:  
They will be found softer than ring-dove's cooings.  
How silent comes the water round that bend;  
Not the minutest whisper does it send  
To the o'erhanging sallows: blades of grass  
Slowly across the chequer'd shadows pass.  
Why, you might read two sonnets, ere they reach  
To where the hurrying freshnesses aye preach  
A natural sermon o'er their pebbly beds;  
Where swarms of minnows show their little heads,  
Staying their wavy bodies 'gainst the streams,  
To taste the luxury of sunny beams  
Temper'd with coolness. How they ever wrestle  
With their own sweet delight, and ever nestle  
Their silver bellies on the pebbly sand.  
If you but scantily hold out the hand,  
That very instant not one will remain;  
But turn your eye, and they are there again.

Clarke said that Keats told him that this description was a "recollection of our having frequently loitered over the rail of a footbridge that spanned . . . a little brook in the last field upon entering Edmonton." He said too that Keats "thought the picture correct, and acknowledged to a partiality for it." The description is an illustration of Wordsworth's theory of poetic composition — "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings . . . recollected in tranquillity." It is also an illustration of the enrichment of personal experience by the reminiscences of poetry. When Keats described "Nature's gentle doings" in Pymmes Brook in Edmonton, he recalled the Banished Duke's eulogy of the peaceful pastoral life in the Forest of Arden (*As You Like It*, II i. 15-17):

And this our life, exempt from public haunt,  
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones, and good in every thing.

The second half of the poem is a psychological explanation in sensuous symbols of the natural source of poetic inspiration, a problem that had been the subject of Keats's speculations about poetry since the fall of 1815, when he accepted the principles of the natural poetry which Hunt had adapted from Wordsworth. In all of his poems in this period, he stated, implicitly or explicitly, the fundamental principle that a poet is stimulated by sensations of natural beauty into a state of ecstasy, in which he sees the mysteries of nature. The mysteries which a poet sees, he said, depend upon the "poetic lore" with which his memory is stored. In the *Epistle to George Felton Mathew*, the fairies which Keats saw in a state of natural inspiration were suggested by Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* and Hunt's *Politics and Poetics*. In the *Epistle to my Brother George*, the gay knights on prancing steeds were suggested by Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and Hunt's *Story of Rimini*. In *Sleep and Poetry*, the realm of Flora, Pan, and the nymphs was suggested by Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals*, Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, and Hunt's *Story of Rimini*.

In *I stood tip-toe upon a little hill*, Keats developed this theory still further. He said that the poets of Greece, stimulated by sensations of natural beauty, were inspired to sing the nature myths of Cupid and Psyche, Pan and Syrinx, Narcissus and Echo, and Endymion and Phoebe. Hunt, in his review of the *Poems*, said that this theory of the origin of Greek myths was derived from the fourth book of Wordsworth's *Excursion*.

In the passage to which Hunt referred, Wordsworth said:



The lively Grecian, in a land of hills,  
 Rivers and fertile plains, and sounding shores, —  
 Under a cope of sky more variable,  
 Could find commodious place for every God . . .  
 — In that fair clime, the lonely herdsman, stretched  
 On the soft grass through half a summer's day,  
 With music lulled his indolent repose:  
 And, in some fit of weariness, if he,  
 When his own breath was silent, chanced to hear  
 A distant strain, far sweeter than the sounds  
 Which his poor skill could make, his fancy fetched,  
 Even from the blazing chariot of the sun,  
 A beardless Youth, who touched a golden lute,  
 And filled the illumined groves with ravishment.  
 The nightly hunter, lifting a bright eye  
 Up towards the crescent moon, with grateful heart  
 Called on the lovely wanderer who bestowed  
 That timely light, to share his joyous sport:  
 And hence, a beaming Goddess with her Nymphs,  
 Across the lawn and through the darksome grove,  
 Not unaccompanied with tuneful notes  
 By echo multiplied from rock or cave,  
 Swept in the storm of chase. . . .

Keats reproduced Wordsworth's theory exactly. Just as Wordsworth related the origin of the myth of Diana, so Keats related the myth of Diana's love for Endymion, the shepherd prince.

He was a Poet, sure a lover too,  
 Who stood on Latmus' top, what time there blew  
 Soft breezes from the myrtle vale below;  
 And brought in faintness solemn, sweet, and slow  
 A hymn from Dian's temple; while upswelling,  
 The incense went to her own starry dwelling.  
 But though her face was clear as infant's eyes,  
 Though she stood smiling o'er the sacrifice,  
 The Poet wept at her so piteous fate,  
 Wept that such beauty should be desolate:  
 So in fine wrath some golden sounds he won,  
 And gave meek Cynthia her Endymion.

Wordsworth inspired Keats, Hunt, and Reynolds with a keen interest in Greek mythology in this period. While Keats was composing *I stood tip-toe upon a little hill* and intuiting *Endymion*, the long, mythological romance which he composed in 1817, Hunt intuited *The Nymphs*, a long, descriptive, mythological poem. He composed it in the first part of 1817 and published it in 1818 in a volume entitled *Foliage*. *The Nymphs*, he said in his preface, was "founded on that beautiful mythology, which it is not one of the



these poems. This mystic flight was derived, as its phraseology indicates, from Drayton's *Man in the Moone*, one of the chief sources of *Endymion*. Drayton said that Phoebe transported Endymion into the sky and showed him its mysteries: She

Calls down the Dragons that her chariot draw,  
And with ENDMION pleased that she saw,  
Mounteth thereon, in twinkling of an eye,  
Stripping the winds, *beholding from the sky*  
*The earth in roundness of a perfect ball,*  
Which as a point but of this mighty all,  
Wise nature fix'd, that permanent doth stay,  
Whereas *the spheres* by a *diurnal sway*  
Of the first Mover carried are about, etc.

## 5

(In the period which comprises January, February, and March of 1817, Keats arrived at the second great turning-point in the evolution of his poetry. He participated in the greatest extravagances of his "brotherhood in song" with Leigh Hunt, and at the same time he was subjected to those forces which induced him to throw off Hunt's influence in the first part of April. The fundamental and the ultimate cause of his rejection of Hunt's poetic system was his outgrowth of the superficial familiarity, sentimentality, affectation, and vainglory which Hunt represented. The immediate cause, however, was the conflict of personalities which began in the coterie with the advent of Shelley in December 1816. Neither Keats nor Reynolds was attracted by Shelley; and Haydon and Severn were bitterly offended by his impish assaults upon their Christian convictions. Since Hunt supported Shelley, that "heart of hearts," in every argument that arose, he alienated the other members of his circle. When Haydon quarrelled with Shelley and Hunt at the dinner party in the early part of January, his intense egotism made him perceive and exaggerate every defect in Hunt's personality, conduct, and principles. Keats endeavored to maintain a neutral position amid the quarrels of his friends, and for a time he swung like a pendulum between Hunt and Haydon.

In January 1817 Keats prepared his poems for publication, and in February he corrected the proofs as they passed through the press. The only poem he composed in January is the sonnet *After dark vapours have oppressed our plains*. Woodhouse made two transcripts of the sonnet, one in his Commonplace Book and the other in his Book of Transcripts. He signed and dated the one "J. Keats.

Jan: 31, 1817" and he dated the other "31 Jan<sup>y</sup> 1817," observing that he obtained it "from J. H. R." The whole sonnet evinces a lassitude of the imagination. The images are eclectic, artificial, and sentimental. The warm day in January, after a long dreary season of vapors, reminded Keats of a series of "luxuries." The mood of sensuous sentimentality, the use of the verb "feel" as a noun, and the allusion to Sappho (the bust of her in Hunt's study) show Hunt's influence. Hunt liked the sonnet well enough to publish it in *The Examiner* for February 23.

The poets of Hunt's coterie rose to extreme heights of vanity in this period. In January and February, Keats and Hunt composed in a hothouse of mutual admiration. After he had withdrawn from the circle, Keats said with distaste that he had been "dictated with praise, a pet lamb in a sentimental farce." Cornelius Webb, a young poetaster, reflected the tone of conversation in this set. In the verses which Blackwood's reviewer pounced upon, he said:

Our talk shall be (a theme we never tire on)  
Of Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron,  
(Our England's Dante) — Wordsworth — Hunt, and Keats,  
The Muses' son of promise: and what feats  
He yet may do.

Woodhouse related the most extravagant episode of Keats's association with Hunt in this period. He wrote the first draft in his Scrap-book and, after he had corrected it, copied it into his Book of Transcripts. I quote the finished version from the Book of Transcripts:

As Keats & Leigh Hunt were taking their wine together after dinner at the house of the latter, the whim seized them (probably at Hunt's instigation) to crown themselves with laurel after the fashion of the elder Bards — while they were thus attired, two of Hunt's friends happened to call upon him — Just before their entrance H. removed the wreath from his own brows, and suggested to K. that he might as well do the same. K. however in his mad enthusiastic way, vowed that he would not take off his crown for any human being: and he accordingly wore it, without any explanation as long as the visit lasted —

He mentioned the circumstance afterwards to one of his friends along with his sense of the folly (and I believe presumption) of his conduct — and he said he was determined to record it by an apologetic ode to Apollo on the occasion — He shortly after wrote this fragment.

Woodhouse was unaware, it would seem, of the sonnets which Keats and Hunt composed in emulation while they were wearing their crowns. Keats composed two sonnets, *On receiving a laurel crown from Leigh Hunt* and *To the Ladies who saw me crown'd*; and Hunt likewise composed two sonnets, *On Receiving a Crown of Ivy*

from *John Keats* and *On the Same*. These sonnets correct Woodhouse's story of the episode. Keats crowned Hunt with ivy and Hunt crowned Keats with laurel, and the friends who called upon Hunt on this occasion were three ladies.

On receiving a laurel crown from Leigh Hunt —

Minutes are flying swiftly, and as yet  
 Nothing unearthly has enticed my brain  
 Into a delphic Labyrinth — I would fain  
 Catch an immortal thought to pay the debt  
 I owe to the kind Poet who has set  
 Upon my ambitious head a glorious gain —  
 Two bending laurel Sprigs — 'tis nearly pain  
 To be conscious of such a Coronet.  
 Still time is fleeting, and no dream arises  
 Georgeous as I would have it — only I see  
 A Trampling down of what the world most prizes  
 Turbans and Crowns, and blank regality;  
 And then I run into most wild surmises  
 Of all the many glories that may be.

This vain and sentimental episode did not inspire Keats's imagination. In the octave he took his want of inspiration as his theme but in the sestet he caught a thought of Hunt's, the glories of an emancipated world. In September 1817, when he was composing the opening verses of the third book of *Endymion*, he recalled this thought with its phraseology —

There are who lord it o'er their fellow-men  
 With most prevailing tinsel . . .  
 . . . With not one tinge  
 Of sanctuary splendour, not a sight  
 Able to face an owl's, they still are dight  
 By the blear-eyed nations in empurpled vests,  
 And crowns, and turbans. . . .  
 Are then regalities all gilded masks?

The passage in *Endymion* has little more inspiration than the sonnet which it reproduces. Despite the fine phrase with which it begins, "There are who lord it o'er their fellow-men," it is an incongruous mixture of bombast and triviality. The diction of the sonnet reaches backward as well as forward. Keats took two noble phrases, "wild surmises" from his sonnet *On first looking into Chapman's Homer* and "glorious gain" from Wordsworth's *Character of the Happy Warrior*, and debased them in a trivial context.

Hunt's two sonnets on this episode are much better than Keats's. In the octave of the first sonnet, he paid a graceful but patronizing compliment to the young poet who had crowned him with ivy. In

the sestet he described Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*. As he looked up from his composition, I presume, he saw the print of this painting which hung on the wall of his study. In the second sonnet he described rather imaginatively the "lofty feeling" which the ivy crown inspired in him.

Keats, with great effort, succeeded in composing one sonnet while Hunt composed two. When the three ladies called, he retained his laurel crown in a spirit of bravado, and the "glee Circling from three sweet-pair of Lips in Mirth" suggested the theme of his second sonnet. In the case of this sonnet, also, he was fain to draw upon a former composition. The series of questions by which he compared his laurel crown with various lovely things reminds us of the similar series of questions in the opening verses of *Sleep and Poetry*.

The two sonnets which Hunt wrote were circulated among the members of the coterie. When Keats's *Poems* were published in the first week in March, Hunt's sonnets were transcribed into the copies which Keats presented to George Keats, Thomas Richards, and other friends. They were published by Hunt, who regarded the episode with satisfaction, in *Foliage* in 1818. Keats's two sonnets, which were never published by him, were so limited in circulation that Woodhouse, who collected his poems with painstaking thoroughness, never discovered a copy of them. They were transcribed by Keats on a blank page opposite the section of sonnets in the copy of the *Poems* which he presented to Reynolds. The unique manuscript in this copy of the *Poems* was reproduced in photograph in *The Times* for May 18, 1914. Keats transcribed the sonnets for Reynolds, it is possible, because Reynolds' three sisters (or mother and two sisters) were the ladies who saw him crowned with laurel.

It is probable that Reynolds, who collaborated with Haydon in persuading Keats to withdraw from Hunt's coterie, advised him to suppress the sonnets which he composed on receiving a laurel crown from Hunt. Woodhouse did not give the name of the person from whom he obtained the story of the intercoronation. He copied the apologetic *Ode to Apollo*, he said in his Book of Transcripts, "from a M.S. in Keats's writing"; and afterwards he compared his copy of the ode with Reynolds' copy. Reynolds lent his volume of manuscript poems to Taylor and Taylor lent it to Woodhouse. On November 23, 1820 Woodhouse wrote Taylor:

I return you non sine gratiis actis Reynolds' volume of poetry — I see there are a few variations in his Edition of the Sonnets on the sea, & on the Elgin Marbles, from the copy I had. Perhaps he wrote them from memory — I see he entitles the "Ode to Apollo" a fragment —

The intercoronation took place before the first week in March 1817, the date of the publication of Keats's *Poems*, because the sonnets which Keats and Hunt composed upon this occasion were transcribed in the presentation copies of the *Poems*. February, the period immediately preceding the publication of the *Poems*, is the period in which Keats could have been drawn most easily into this extravagant episode.

About the middle of February, I judge, he composed the sonnet in which he dedicated his *Poems* to Hunt.

On the evening when the last proof-sheet was brought from the printer [Clarke said], it was accompanied by the information that if a "dedication to the book was intended it must be sent forthwith." Whereupon he withdrew to a side-table, and in the buzz of a mixed conversation (for there were several friends in the room) he composed and brought to Charles Ollier, the publisher, the Dedication Sonnet to Leigh Hunt.

TO LEIGH HUNT, ESQ

Glory and loveliness have passed away;  
 For if we wander out in early morn,  
 No wreathed incense do we see upborne  
 Into the east, to meet the smiling day:  
 No crowd of nymphs soft voic'd and young, and gay,  
 In woven baskets bringing ears of corn,  
 Roses, and pinks, and violets, to adorn  
 The shrine of Flora in her early May.  
 But there are left delights as high as these,  
 And I shall ever bless my destiny,  
 That in a time, when under pleasant trees  
 Pan is no longer sought, I feel a free  
 A leafy luxury, seeing I could please  
 With these poor offerings, a man like thee.

In the octave Keats expressed Wordsworth's complaint that men no longer worship natural beauty, but he suffused this complaint in Hunt's poetic luxury or sentimental sensuousness. In the sestet he paid an appropriate and doubtless a sincere tribute to Hunt, to whom he owed the style and substance of his poems.

In the last week in February, Keats composed his sonnet on *The Floure and the Leafe*. Clarke related the story of the composition of the sonnet as follows:

Another example of his promptly suggestive imagination, and uncommon facility in giving it utterance, occurred one day upon returning home and finding me asleep on the sofa, with a volume of Chaucer open at the "Flower and the Leaf." After expressing to me his admiration of the poem, which he had been reading, he gave me the fine testimony of that opinion in pointing to the sonnet he had written at the close of it, which was an extempore effusion, and without

the alteration of a single word. It lies before me now, signed "J. K., Feb., 1817." If my memory do not betray me, this charming out-door fancy scene was Keats's first introduction to Chaucer. The "Troilus and Cresseide" was certainly an after acquaintance with him, and clearly do I recall his approbation of the favourite passages that had been marked in my own copy. Upon being requested, he retraced the poem, and with his pen confirmed and denoted those which were congenial with his own feeling and judgment. These two circumstances, associated with the literary career of this cherished object of his friend's esteem and love, have stamped a priceless value upon that friend's miniature 18mo. copy of Chaucer.

Clarke's story, which is expressed in ambiguous phrases, has been misinterpreted. It should be interpreted, I believe, as follows: One day in February 1817 Keats returned home — that is, to his own lodgings — and found Clarke asleep on the sofa with a volume of Chaucer open at *The Flowre and the Leafe*. He composed the sonnet on *The Flowre and the Leafe* on a blank space at the end of the poem; and, when Clarke awoke, he expressed his admiration for the poem and pointed to the sonnet which he had composed upon it. "This charming out-door fancy scene" (that is, *The Flowre and the Leafe*), Clarke said, "was Keats's first introduction to Chaucer" (that is, the first poem of Chaucer's which Keats read). Clarke was probably right, for *The Flowre and the Leafe*, which influenced *Sleep and Poetry*, was the first Chaucerian or pseudo-Chaucerian poem which had a discernible influence upon Keats's poetry.

The volume of Chaucer in which Keats wrote the sonnet is now in the British Museum. It is volume XII of a copy of an edition of *The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* published in Edinburgh in 1782. In this copy the original fourteen volumes of the edition are bound in seven. Woodhouse transcribed the sonnet into his Commonplace Book and into his Book of Transcripts. In the latter he entitled it "Sonnet. Written on the blank space of a leaf at the end of Chaucer's tale of 'The flowre & the lefe,'" and dated it "Febr. 1817."

The sonnet is a bit of sentimental sensuousness in Hunt's style, marred, however, by an unfortunate rhyme, sobbings/robins. Keats had a precedent for this rhyme, Ernest de Sélincourt pointed out, in Wordsworth's poem *The Redbreast Chasing the Butterfly*. I quote the autograph manuscript:

This pleasant Tale is like a little copse:  
 The honied lines do freshly interlace  
 To Keep the Reader in so sweet a place  
 So that he here and there full-hearted stops  
 And oftentimes he feels the dewy drops  
 Come cool and suddenly against his face  
 And by the wandering Melody may trace



Which way the tender-legged Linnet hops —  
 Oh! what a Power hath white Simplicity!<sup>1</sup>  
 What mighty Power has this gentle story  
 I that for ever feel athirst for glory  
 Could at this Moment be content to lie  
 Meekly upon the Grass as those whose sobbings  
 Were heard of none beside the mournful Robins.

J. K. Feb<sup>y</sup> 1817 —

Keats showed his sonnet to Reynolds, and Reynolds was inspired to write a sonnet upon it. Woodhouse preserved Reynolds' sonnet in his *Commonplace Book* and in his *Book of Transcripts*. He entitled it "Sonnet — To Keats. On reading his sonnet written in Chaucer," signed it "J. H. Reynolds," and dated it "27 Feb. 1817." Reynolds addressed Keats in the sentimental and complimentary style of Hunt's school of poetry.

Thy thoughts, dear Keats, are like fresh-gathered leaves,  
 Or white flowers pluck'd from some sweet lily bed;  
 They set the heart a-breathing, and they shed  
 The glow of meadows, mornings, and spring eves,  
 Over the excited soul. Thy genius weaves  
 Songs that shall make the age be nature-led,  
 And win that coronal for thy young head  
 Which Time's strange hand of freshness ne'er bereaves.  
 Go on! and keep thee to thine own green way,  
 Singing in that same key which Chaucer sung; —  
 Be thou companion of the Summer day,  
 Roaming the fields, and olden woods among: —  
 So shall thy Muse be ever in her May;  
 And thy luxuriant Spirit ever young.

The definite date which Woodhouse gave to Reynolds' sonnet, February 27, 1817, establishes the date of Keats's sonnet as shortly before February 27, possibly February 26. Encouraged by the praise of Clarke and Reynolds, Keats gave the sonnet to Hunt, who published it in *The Examiner* for March 16. Hunt commented on it with his usual sentimental and affected reference to the young poet and the laurel tree. "The following sonnet . . . is from the pen of the young poet . . . who may already lay true claim to that title: —

. . . the youngest he  
 That sits in shadow of Apollo's tree."

In this period Haydon was not only exhorting Keats to withdraw from Hunt's coterie but was also instilling in him a conception of poetry which prepared him for his rejection of Hunt's poetic system. With his enthusiasm for the Bible, Greek sculpture, Shakes-

peare's plays, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Haydon inspired Keats with an understanding of the grand style of the heroic art of the past. He painted huge historical pictures in the grand style and he encouraged Keats to undertake the composition of a great poem, a romance or an epic.

On the first or second day of March, Haydon conducted Keats and Reynolds to the British Museum to see the Greek marbles which Lord Elgin had salvaged from the Parthenon. Keats was fully prepared to understand and appreciate the marbles. He had followed the course of the Elgin Marbles controversy in the pages of *The Examiner* and *The Champion*, he had written a sonnet to Haydon as their champion, he had seen sketches and casts of them in Haydon's painting-room, and he had heard Haydon explain the principles upon which they had been intuited and executed. After he had returned home that evening, he composed the sonnet

On seeing the Elgin Marbles

My spirit is too weak — mortality  
 Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,  
 And each imagin'd pinnacle and steep  
 Of godlike hardship, tells me I must die  
 Like a sick Eagle looking at the sky.  
 Yet 'tis a gentle luxury to weep  
 That I have not the cloudy winds to keep,  
 Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye.  
 Such dim-conceived glories of the brain  
 Bring round the heart an undescribable feud;  
 So do these wonders a most dizzy pain,  
 That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude  
 Wasting of old Time — with a billow main —  
 A sun — a shadow of a magnitude

This sonnet is the first poem in which Keats began to emancipate himself from Hunt's familiar and sentimental style. In the presence of the heroic sculptures of Phidias, his own mortality weighed upon him like unwilling sleep and he felt like a sick eagle looking at the sky. Observing the fragmentary condition of the marbles, the mingling of Grecian grandeur with the rude wasting of old Time, the feeling of his own mortality was succeeded by the feeling of the mortality of all art. Their transcendent greatness crushed him, but at the same time purged him of triviality, sentimentality, vanity, and affectation and gave him heroic thoughts which he expressed in lofty style.

The elevated qualities of his style were influenced by his reminiscences of Shakespeare's sonnets. At this time, as we shall see more

fully in a later connection, he began an intensive study of Shakespeare's poetry. The crumbling of the Greek marbles reminded him of Shakespeare's complaints of the "wastes of time" (Sonnet 12):

When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced  
The rich proud cost of outworn buried age;  
When sometime lofty towers I see down-razed  
And brass eternal slave to mortal rage; . . .

(Sonnet 64)

and

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,  
But sad mortality o'er-sways their power. . . .

(Sonnet 65)

Keats could not as yet, however, rise entirely out of the slough of sentimentality and triviality. He bridged over the two noble conceptions in the sonnet with a passage of "luxury" or sentimental sensuousness:

Yet 'tis a gentle luxury to weep  
That I have not the cloudy winds to keep,  
Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye.

After he had composed the sonnet *On seeing the Elgin Marbles*, Keats wrote a sonnet to Haydon as the interpreter of the marbles. In this sonnet, which is uninspired, he relapsed into the worst faults of his familiar and sentimental style. He employed the verb "shine" as a noun, the colloquial phrase "Were I of ample strength for such a freak," and the bombastic phrase "In rolling out upfollow'd thunderings." With a lack of good taste he compared the Elgin Marbles with the Infant Jesus and Haydon with the Wise Men of the East.

As soon as Haydon received the two sonnets, he replied with enthusiasm:

My dear Keats,

Many thanks, my dear fellow, for your two noble sonnets, I know not a finer image than the comparison of the poet unable to express his high feelings to a sick eagle looking at the sky. . . . You filled me with fury for an hour, and with admiration for ever.

God bless you

B. R. Haydon

I shall expect you and Clarke and Reynolds tonight.

My dear Keats,

I have really opened my letter to tell you how deeply I feel the high enthusiastic praise with which you have spoken of me in the first Sonnet — be assured

you shall never repent it — the time shall come if God spare my life — when  
you will remember it with delight —

Once more God bless you

B. R. Haydon

In Haydon's manuscript journal, which Harry Buxton Forman examined, this letter is dated March 3, 1817. Since Keats and Haydon corresponded with enthusiastic haste on such occasions, it is probable that they saw the Elgin Marbles on Saturday, March 1, or Monday, March 3, that Keats composed the sonnets immediately after he had returned home, and that he sent them to Haydon at once.

These sonnets were published in *The Champion* for March 9, 1817, in *The Examiner* on the same day, and in the *Annals of the Fine Arts* for April 1818. Haydon had the sonnets which Wordsworth, Keats, and other poets addressed to him published in all the periodicals with which he had influence. There is a transcript of Keats's sonnets in Woodhouse's Scrap-book and there is a second in his Book of Transcripts. In the Scrap-book, Woodhouse said that he copied the sonnets from *The Examiner*. There is a single autograph manuscript. Keats transcribed the sonnets on a blank page at the end of the copy of the *Poems* of 1817 which he presented to Reynolds. In this same copy of the *Poems*, as we have seen, he transcribed also the sonnets which he composed on receiving a laurel crown from Leigh Hunt. *The Times* for May 18, 1914 reproduced the manuscript of the laurel crown sonnets but unfortunately did not reproduce that of the Elgin Marbles sonnets. I have quoted therefore the text which *The Examiner* printed.

Keats's *Poems* were published as early as the first week in March 1817, for they were reviewed by Reynolds in *The Champion* for March 9. It is probable, as Sir Sidney Colvin and Miss Lowell believed, that they were issued to the public on Monday, March 3. In a copy of the *Poems* which was probably Charles Ollier's, there is transcribed a sonnet to Keats which is dated March 2 and which celebrates evidently the publication of the *Poems*. Harry Buxton Forman, who examined the manuscript of this sonnet, observed: "I have no evidence of authorship beyond the handwriting; but I have no doubt of its being the writing of Charles Ollier." Since Ollier was the publisher of the *Poems*, he received, it is probable, the first copy which came from the binders.

The bearing of this sonnet upon the date of the publication of the *Poems* is complicated, however, by a discovery which Miss Lowell made. In a copy of the *Poems* which is inscribed "From the author

to his Friend, Thos. Richards," there are transcribed the two sonnets which Hunt composed on receiving an ivy crown from Keats and the sonnet which Forman attributed to Ollier. Hunt's sonnets are signed but not dated, and the other sonnet is dated March 2 but not signed. The question arises whether Ollier or Richards wrote the sonnet to Keats. Richards was a friend to whom Keats alluded five times in his correspondence. He may be identified with the Thomas Richards who Forman discovered was a clerk in the Store-keeper's Office of the Ordnance Department of the Tower and whom Charles Brown, an intimate friend of Keats's, appointed executor of his will and guardian of his son. Keats described Richards as having an out-of-the-way wit which puzzles one's head; but there is no evidence that he composed poetry. Ollier, on the contrary, was a poet of Hunt's school of poetry and the style of his sonnets is the same as that of the sonnet to Keats. The transcription of Ollier's sonnet in Richards' copy of the *Poems* may be explained by the supposition that Richards was related to C. Richards, whom Ollier employed to print the *Poems*. If Ollier received an advance copy of the *Poems* on March 2, as the sonnet which he wrote to Keats on March 2 seems to indicate, the *Poems* must have been issued to the public a day or two thereafter.

"The first volume of Keats's minor muse was launched amid the cheers and fond anticipations of all his circle," Clarke said. "Every one of us expected (and not unreasonably) that it would create a sensation in the literary world." The "fond anticipations" of the coterie are perfectly expressed in the sonnet which Charles Ollier, the publisher, wrote in his copy of the *Poems*:

Keats I admire thine upward daring Soul,  
 Thine eager grasp at immortality  
 I deem within thy reach; — rejoic'd I see  
 Thee spurn, with brow serene, the gross controul  
 Of circumstance, while o'er thee visions roll  
 In radiant pomp of lovely Poesy!  
 She points to blest abodes where spirits free  
 Feed on her smiles and her great name extol. —  
 Still shall the pure flame bright within thee burn  
 While nature's voice alone directs thy mind;  
 Who bids thy speculation inward turn  
 Assuring thee her transcript thou shalt find.  
 Live her's — live freedom's friend — so round thine urn  
 The oak shall with thy laurels be entwined.

Reynolds, who was the literary critic of *The Champion*, reviewed Keats's *Poems* in that newspaper for March 9. He began his review as follows:

Here is a little volume filled throughout with very graceful and genuine poetry. The author is a very young man, and one, as we augur from the present work, that is likely to make a great addition to those who would overthrow that artificial taste which French criticism has long planted amongst us. At a time when nothing is talked of but the power and the passion of Lord Byron, and the playful and elegant fancy of Moore, and the correctness of Rogers, and the sublimity and pathos of Campbell (these terms we should conceive are kept ready composed in the Edinburgh Review-shop) a young man starts suddenly before us, with a genius that is likely to eclipse them all. He comes fresh from nature, — and the originals of his images are to be found in her keeping. . . .

We find in his poetry the glorious effect of summer days and leafy spots on rich feelings, which are in themselves a summer. He relies directly and wholly on nature. He marries poesy to genuine simplicity. He makes her artless, — yet abstains carefully from giving her an uncomely homeliness: — that is, he shows one can be familiar with nature, yet perfectly strange to the habits of common life. Mr. Keats is fated, or "we have no judgment in an honest face," to look at natural objects with his mind, as Shakespeare and Chaucer did, — and not merely with his eye as nearly all modern poets do; — to clothe his poetry with a grand intellectual light, — and to lay his name in the lap of immortality. Our readers will think that we are speaking too highly of this young poet, — but luckily we have the power of making good the ground on which we prophesy so hardily. We shall extract largely from his volume. . . though Mr. Keats's poetry is remarkably abstracted, it is never out of reach of the mind; there are one or two established writers of this day who think that mystery is the soul of poetry — that artlessness is a vice — and that nothing can be graceful that is not metaphysical, — and even young writers have sunk into this error, and endeavoured to puzzle the world with a confused sensibility.

Reynolds shed light upon the poetic forces which were influencing Keats in this period. He prophesied, as Hunt had done in the article *Young Poets*, that Keats would add considerable strength to the new natural school of poetry. He prophesied also that Keats would eclipse Rogers, Campbell, Moore, and Byron, contemporary poets who adhered to the neo-classic and romantic schools of the eighteenth century. He had reacted against Byron, whom Hunt and Keats still admired. He praised the *Imitation of Spenser*, which Keats had composed at the beginning of 1814, but he censured *To Hope*, *To Some Ladies*, and *On receiving a curious Shell, and a Copy of Verses, from the same Ladies*, which Keats had composed in 1815 in the style of eighteenth-century poetry. He praised the *Induction*, *Calidore*, the epistles to George Felton Mathew, George Keats, and Charles Cowden Clarke, *I stood tip-toe upon a little hill*, *Sleep and Poetry*, and the sonnets, all of which Keats composed in 1816 in Hunt's natural style. He said that *Sleep and Poetry* is "the most powerful and the most perfect" poem in the volume and that the sonnets are, "with the exception of Milton's and Wordsworth's," "the most powerful ones in the whole range of English poetry."

He ignored Keats's indebtedness to Leigh Hunt, for he was advising him to withdraw from Hunt's coterie; but, without mentioning him, he censured indirectly two of the fundamental qualities of Hunt's poetry. He praised Keats for looking at natural objects with his mind and not merely with his eye, and for being familiar with nature but strange to the habits of common life. He intended, of course, to admonish him rather than to state a fact. In warning Keats not to present the "habits of common life," he was thinking doubtless of Wordsworth's poetry as well as of Hunt's.

On Sunday evening, March 9, after he had read Reynolds' review in *The Champion*, Keats wrote Reynolds:

Sunday Evening

My dear Reynolds

Your kindness affects me so sensibly that I can merely put down a few monosentences — your criticism only makes me extremely anxious that I should not deceive you.

It's the finest thing by God — as Hazlitt would say. However I hope I may not deceive you, — There are some acquaintances of mine who will scratch their Beards and although I have, I hope, some Charity, I wish their nails may be long. — I will be ready at the time you mention in all Happiness.

There is a report that a young Lady of 16 has written the new Tragedy God bless her — I will know her by Hook or by Crook in less than a week — My Brother's and my Remembrances to your kind sisters.

yours most sincerely

John Keats

After Haydon had received his copy of the *Poems*, he wrote Keats an enthusiastic letter which I shall quote in part in a later connection. "I have read your 'Sleep and Poetry'—," he said, "it is a flash of lightning that will rouse men from their occupations, and keep them trembling for the crash of thunder that will follow." In a postscript he added: "I'll be at Reynolds tonight but latish."

In the month of March, Keats passed a great deal of time in the home of the Reynoldses in Little Britain. Mrs. Charlotte Reynolds, John Hamilton Reynolds' mother, was a woman of literary interests. It is recorded, Sir Sidney Colvin said, that she could hold her own at the Wednesday Evenings of Charles and Mary Lamb. In 1827 she published *Mrs. Leslie and her Grandchildren*, a moral tale for children which Lamb praised in a letter to Thomas Hood. The young poets who gathered in her home regarded her, facetiously but affectionately, as a patroness of letters. Woodhouse transcribed in his Scrap-book a poem in two Spenserian stanzas which was "written," it is entitled, "in the album of the Countess Dowager of Pembroke"— that is, in the album of Mrs. Reynolds. The young poet,

who signed himself "A.G.S.," praised the matronly charms of Mrs. Reynolds. Woodhouse also transcribed a poem which Mrs. Reynolds wrote in the album of her daughter Jane.

There were four daughters in the family: Jane 21 years of age, Marianne 19, Eliza 17, and Charlotte 14. Jane became the wife of Thomas Hood, the poet, in 1824. Marianne, of whom Benjamin Bailey was a suitor at this time, married a Mr. Green a few years afterwards. Eliza was already married, it seems, to a Mr. Longmore. Keats had a friendly, almost a brotherly, affection for Jane, Marianne, and Charlotte, who he said more than once in his letters were very kind to him. He found Jane most congenial, for like her mother she was literary in her interests. In the two letters which he wrote her in September 1817, he engaged with her in a half-humorous, half-serious argument about the respective merits of Juliet and Imogen.

Mrs. Reynolds and her daughters kept albums or commonplace books in which the poets who frequented their home wrote original poems. Woodhouse, who was a friend of the family, borrowed these albums and transcribed several of Keats's poems from them.

Through John Hamilton Reynolds, Keats made some of the most intimate friendships of his life. In March 1817, if not somewhat earlier, he became acquainted with Charles Wentworth Dilke, James Rice, Benjamin Bailey, and Charles Brown. On December 30, 1846 Reynolds wrote Lord Houghton:

Rice knew Keats through me — (as did Dilke and C. Browne) — and was a *very* kind friend of mine. He was in the Law — and drew me into that dreary profession, and ultimately took me into partnership. He was a quiet true wit — extremely well read — had great taste & a sound judgment. For every quality that marks the sensible companion — the valuable friend — the Gentleman and the Man — I have known no one to surpass him.

"Dear generous noble James Rice," Dilke said, "— the best, and in his quaint way one of the wittiest and wisest men I ever knew." "He is the most sensible, and even wise Man I know," Keats said. "— he has a few John Bull prejudices; but they improve him."

Charles Wentworth Dilke, who was 27 years of age at this time, was a clerk in the Navy Pay Office. He was a man of varied intellectual interests — religion, politics, economics, antiquities, and literature. In religion he was somewhat of a sceptic and in political economy a disciple of William Godwin. His mind was logical and inflexible in its processes of thought. Dilke cannot feel that he has a personal identity, Keats complained, unless he has made up his



mind about everything. In literature Dilke was interested at this time in the English dramatists of the Renaissance. Stimulated by Lamb's *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets*, he edited from 1814 to 1816 a series of volumes which supplemented Dodsley's *Old Plays*. He had a very great influence, as we shall see, upon the development of Keats's mind and art.

Charles Brown, who was closely associated with Dilke, did not become intimate with Keats for another year. Benjamin Bailey, the fourth friend whom Keats met through Reynolds, was a student of theology in Magdalen Hall, Oxford University. In the reminiscences of Keats which he wrote for Lord Houghton on May 7, 1849, he said:

It was, I think, about the end of 1816, or the beginning of 1817, that my friend, Mr. Reynolds, wrote to me at Oxford respecting Keats, with whom he & his family had just become acquainted. He conveyed to me the same impressions, which the poet made upon the minds of almost all persons, who had the happiness of knowing him, & subsequently upon myself. Early in 1817 his first Volume of Poems was published by Ollier, which was sent to me. I required no more to satisfy me that he was indeed a poet of rare & original genius.

On my first visit to London, I believe, after the publication of this volume — at least not long after — I was introduced to him. I was delighted with the naturalness & simplicity of his character, & was at once drawn to him by his winning & indeed affectionate manner towards those with whom he was himself pleased. Nor was his personal appearance the least charm of a first acquaintance with the young poet. He bore, along with the strong impress of genius, much beauty of feature & countenance.

Bailey's influence upon Keats's poetry, which began in September 1817, we shall consider later.

In March Keats wrote a sonnet on an engraved gem of Leander which one of the Misses Reynolds gave him. Woodhouse, in his Book of Transcripts, entitled the sonnet "On a Leander, which a young lady (Miss Reynolds [in shorthand]) gave the author." In the Book of Transcripts the sonnet is followed by two poems — *Apollo to the Graces*, which is subscribed "From the orig<sup>l</sup> in Miss Reynolds' possession," and *You say you love*, which is subscribed in shorthand "From Miss Reynolds and Mrs. Jones." It was probably Jane Reynolds who gave the gem of Leander to Keats and from whom Woodhouse obtained a copy of the sonnet. We know that Woodhouse borrowed Jane's album, for he copied into his Scrap-book a poem which he said Mrs. Reynolds wrote in the album of her daughter Jane. The sonnet was first published in 1829 in *The Gem, a Literary Annual* by Thomas Hood the husband of Jane Reynolds.

Woodhouse stated also the nature of the gem of Leander. "I believe it was once Keats's intention," he said, "to write a series of M.S. sonnets & short poems on some of Tassie's gems." Tassie's gems, which were colored paste reproductions, were popular as seals. In March 1819 Keats wrote his sister Fanny that he was thinking of buying some of Tassie's seals for her. "Tell me," he said, "if you have any or if you would like any — and whether you would rather have motto ones like that with which I seal this letter; or heads of great Men such as Shakespeare, Milton etc. — or fancy pieces of Art; such as Fame, Adonis etc." It is impossible to discover which particular one of Tassie's gems of Leander inspired Keats's sonnet, Sir Sidney Colvin said, for, in the general catalogue of Tassie's reproductions, there is a list of over sixty gems which represent Leander swimming the Hellespont.

Woodhouse dated the sonnet "Mar. 1816." Miss Lowell said that an autograph of the sonnet which is in the Bemis Collection is dated "March 181—," the last figure of the year being indecipherable. Woodhouse was right, therefore, in dating the sonnet in March but he was probably wrong in dating it in 1816. According to all other evidence which we have, Keats met John Hamilton Reynolds for the first time in October or November 1816. It is quite improbable, therefore, that Keats was acquainted with the Misses Reynolds in March 1816. When Woodhouse copied the sonnet from the album of Miss Reynolds, he very probably misread 1817 as 1816.

The sonnet is sensuous, vivid, and artistic. It reveals Keats in the process of freeing himself from the defects of Hunt's style. It is somewhat sentimental, but it is without colloquialisms and licenses in diction.

Come hither all sweet maidens soberly,  
 Down-looking aye, and with a chasten'd light  
 Hid in the fringes of your eyelids white,  
 And meekly let your fair hands joined be,  
 As if so gentle that ye could not see,  
 Untouch'd, a victim of your beauty bright,  
 Sinking away to his young spirit's night,  
 Sinking bewilder'd 'mid the dreary sea:  
 'Tis young Leander toiling to his death;  
 Nigh swooning, he doth purse his weary lips  
 For Hero's cheek, and smiles against her smile.  
 O horrid dream! see how his body dips,  
 Dead-heavy; arms and shoulders gleam awhile:  
 He's gone; up bubbles all his amorous breath!

The sonnet reveals evidence of that intense and comprehensive study of Renaissance poetry which Keats began as a preparation for

the composition of *Endymion*. His impressions of the gem of Leander were enriched by reminiscences of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* and numerous allusions to the story in the poetry of the Renaissance. When he composed the sonnet, Shakespearean images which he employed afterwards in *Endymion* were already rising into his consciousness. The image,

Hid in the fringes of your eyelids white,

was repeated in two images in *Endymion*,

Those same full fringed lids a constant blind . . . ,  
[II. 563]

and

Whose eyelids curtain'd up their jewels dim. . . .  
[I 394]

These three images were fused reminiscences of two of Shakespeare's images,

The fringed curtains of thine eye advance . . .  
[*Tempest*, I. ii. 408]

and

Her eyelids, cases to those heavenly jewels . . .  
Begin to part their fringes of bright gold. . . .  
[*Pericles*, III. ii. 99-101]

The image of Leander

Sinking away to his young spint's night . . .

is a reminiscence of Shakespeare's simile of the dying Cassius sinking to night:

O setting sun,  
As in thy red rays thou dost sink to night,  
So in his red blood Cassius's day is set.  
[*Julius Caesar*, V. iii. 60 *et seq.*]

Keats recalled these verses from *Julius Caesar* in a famous passage in *Endymion* (II. 723 *et seq.*) in which he complained that the sun of English poesy had set with the passing of the age of Shakespeare.

In March 1817, it seems, Keats saw very much more of Haydon and Reynolds than of Hunt. One day after the publication of the *Poems*, Hunt said, Keats met him in Milfield Lane and gave him a copy. At the end of March, Hunt, his wife, his sister-in-law, and his children departed to Marlow for a long visit with the Shelleys. Hunt and his wife returned to London about June 25, it seems, and took a house at Maida Hill, Paddington, but his sister-in-law and his younger children remained with the Shelleys a month longer.

Clarke and Keats helped Hunt prepare for his visit with the Shelleys. They disposed of the papers which Hunt had left in his cupboard and made arrangements with Thomas Bensley, the printer of the second edition of *The Story of Rimini*, to send proofs to Hunt at Marlow. After Keats had himself left London, he wrote Hunt from Margate on May 10:

On arriving at this treeless affair I wrote to my Brother George to request C. C. C. to do the thing you wot of respecting Rimini; and George tells me he has undertaken it with great Pleasure; so I hope there has been an understanding between you for many Proofs — C. C. C. is well acquainted with Bensley. Now why did you not send the key of your Cupboard which I know was full of Papers? We would have lock'd them all in a trunk together with those you told me to destroy, which indeed I did not do for fear of demolishing Receipts.

In the last week of March before Hunt left London, Keats, inspired by the republication of *The Story of Rimini*, composed a sonnet upon the poem. On March 27 he attended a typical festive meeting of the members of Hunt's coterie in the home of Vincent Novello, the musical composer. We learn these facts from a recently discovered letter (postmarked 26 March 1817) which Keats wrote to Clarke.

Hampstead Tuesday aft.

My dear Charles,

When shall we see each other again? In Heaven or in Hell, or in deep Places? In crooked Lanes are we to meet or in Salisbury Plain? or jumbled together at Drury Lane Door? For my part I know not when it is to be except that it may be possible to take place at M<sup>r</sup> Novello's tomorrow evening whither M<sup>r</sup> Hunt and myself are going and where M<sup>r</sup> Novello requested M<sup>r</sup> Hunt to invite you per letter the which I offered to do. So we shall meet you there tomorrow evening — M<sup>r</sup> H. has got a great way into a Poem on the Nymphs and has said a number of beautiful things. I have also written a few Lines and a Sonnet on Rimini which I will copy for you against tomorrow — M<sup>r</sup> H. desires to be remembered to you.

Your's sincerely

John Keats —

N. B. we shall have a Hymn of M<sup>r</sup> H.'s composing 4 voices — go it!

Lord Houghton published the sonnet *On Leigh Hunt's Poem "The Story of Rimini"* in 1848 and dated it correctly 1817. He did not state the source of his text; and, so far as I know, there is no extant autograph or transcript. This sonnet very fittingly is the last record of Keats's discipleship to Hunt. He recaptured for the moment the mood of those sonnets which he composed on reading Hunt's *Story of Rimini* in the spring of 1816. He was a long time freeing himself from Hunt's style, but he never again employed it consciously and willingly.

Despite the fond anticipations of his friends, Keats's *Poems* were not bought and read by the public.

Alas! [Clarke said] the book might have emerged in Timbuctoo with far stronger chance of fame and approbation. It never passed to a second edition; the first was but a small one, and that was never sold off. The whole community, as if by compact, seemed determined to know nothing about it.

Keats, in the rejected Preface to *Endymion*, referred to the reception of his *Poems*:

About a twelvemonth since, I published a little book of verses; it was read by some dozen of my friends who lik'd it; and some dozen whom I was unacquainted with, who did not.

In the first part of April, before Keats left London, Reynolds, who had assumed the management of Keats's poetic career, advised him, it is probable, that the publishers, Charles and James Ollier, were not pushing the sale of the *Poems*. Reynolds was a personal friend of John Taylor and James Augustus Hessey, who had published his *Naid* in the summer of 1816. He introduced Keats to Taylor and Hessey, it is probable, convinced them of Keats's poetic genius, and persuaded them to undertake the publication of *Endymion*, the long romance which Keats was intending to compose in the summer and autumn of 1817. In the meantime Keats's relations with the Olliers went from bad to worse. In the latter part of April, after Keats had left London, his brother George wrote the Olliers a letter which provoked the following curt reply.

3 Welbeck St  
29<sup>th</sup> April 1817

Sir

We regret that your brother ever requested us to publish his book, or that our opinion of its talent should have led us to acquiesce in undertaking it. — We are, however, much obliged to you for relieving us from the unpleasant necessity of declining any further connexion with it which we must have done, as we think the curiosity is satisfied and the sale has dropped — By far the greater number of Persons who have purchased it from us have found fault with it in such plain terms, that we have in many cases offer'd to take the book back rather than be annoyed with the ridicule which has, time after time, been shower'd on it. — In fact it was only on Saturday last that we were under the mortification of having our own opinion of it's merits flatly contradicted by a Gentleman who told us he considered it "no better than a take in." —

These are unpleasant imputations for any one in business to labour under, but we should have borne them and concealed their existence from you had not the stile of your note shewn us that such delicacy would be quite thrown away. We shall take means without delay for ascertaining the number of copies on hand & you shall be informed accordingly.

We are  
Your most obed<sup>t</sup> Serv<sup>ts</sup>  
C & J Ollier

Taylor and Hessey, it is probable, took over the sale of the *Poems*; for there was an advertisement of this volume, Miss Lowell discovered, in one of their publications.

Although the *Poems* did not sell, they were the subject of more than the usual number of reviews in current periodicals. There were six reviews of them in the course of the year 1817, most of which were favorable and none of which was hostile. Reynolds reviewed the *Poems*, as we have seen, in *The Champion* for March 9. There was a very brief but a very laudatory review in *The Monthly Magazine* for April (XLIII, 248).

For the model of his style [the reviewer said], the author has had recourse to the age of Elizabeth, and, if he has not wholly avoided the quaintness that characterizes the writings of that period, it must be allowed by every candid reader that the fertile fancy and beautiful diction of our old poets, is not infrequently rivaled [*sic*] by Mr. Keats.

George Felton Mathew, Keats's former friend, published a review of the *Poems* in *The European Magazine* for May 1817. He wrote it before the end of March, it is probable, for it was announced in the April number of the magazine as one of the articles which were postponed to the next number. Mathew's estrangement from Keats began after October 1816, when he published his epistle to Keats in *The European Magazine*, and before March 1817, when he wrote his review of Keats's *Poems* for the same magazine. The estrangement was caused, we see clearly in the review, by Keats's neglect of Mathew when he became a member of Hunt's coterie at the end of October 1816.

In the review Mathew praised Keats's descriptions, disparaged his sentiments, censured his versification, and rebuked his ideas. Being excessively sentimental, he thought, as he wrote Lord Houghton in 1846, that Keats "admired more the external decorations than felt the deep emotions of the Muse." A poet of the sentimental and romantic school of the latter half of the eighteenth century, he disapproved of Keats's adoption of Hunt's natural style. He was provoked, therefore, by Reynolds' prophecy that Keats would add strength to the new natural school and that he would eclipse Rogers, Campbell, Moore, and Byron, who wrote in the style of eighteenth-century poetry. He quoted two passages from *I stood tip-toe upon a little hill* and observed:

The volume before us indeed is full of imaginations and descriptions equally delicate and elegant with these; but, although we have looked into it with pleasure, and strongly recommend it to the perusal of all lovers of real poetry, we cannot, as another critic has injudiciously attempted, roll the name of Byron,

Moore, Campbell and Rogers, into the milky way of literature, because Keats is pouring forth his splendours in the Orient. We do not imagine that the fame of one poet, depends upon the fall of another, or that our morning and our evening stars necessarily eclipse the constellations of the meridian.

We cannot then advance for our author equal claim to public notice for maturity of thought, propriety of feeling, or felicity of style. But while we blame the slovenly independence of his versification, we must allow that thought, sentiment, and feeling, particularly in the active use and poetical display of them, belong more to the maturity of summer fruits than to the infancy of vernal blossoms; to that knowledge of the human mind and heart which is acquired only by observation and experience, than to the early age, or fervid imagination of our promising author. But if the gay colours and the sweet fragrance of bursting blossoms be the promise of future treasures, then may we prophecy boldly of the future eminence of our young poet, for we have nowhere found them so early or so beautifully displayed as in the pages of the volume before us.

We might transcribe the whole volume were we to point out every instance of the luxuriance of his imagination, and the puerility of his sentiments. With these distinguishing features, it cannot be but many passages will appear abstracted and obscure. Feeble and false thoughts are easily lost sight of in the redundancy of poetical decoration.

Mathew disapproved of Keats's censure of the school of Pope in the famous passage in *Sleep and Poetry*.

These lines are indeed satirical and poignant, but levelled at the author of *Eloise*, and of *Windsor Forest*; of the *Essays* and the *Satires*, they will form no sun, no centre of a system; but like the moon exploded from the South Sea, the mere satellite will revolve only around the head of its own author, and reflect upon him an unchanging face of ridicule and rebuke. Like Balaam's ass before the angel, offensive only to the power that goads it on.

Mathew resented Keats's disparagement of the poems which he had composed in 1815, during his association with Mathew, in the style of eighteenth-century poetry.

We shall pass over to the last of some minor pieces printed in the middle of the book, of superior versification, indeed, but of which, therefore, he seems to be partly ashamed, from a declaration that they were written earlier than the rest.

Mathew ridiculed those poems which Keats composed in 1816 in the style of Leigh Hunt. Discussing *Calidore*, he observed:

This fragment is as pretty and as innocent as childishness can make it, save that it savours too much, — as indeed do almost all these poems, — of the foppery and affectation of Leigh Hunt!

In the two last paragraphs of the review, Mathew censured those moral, political, and religious principles which Keats had learned

from Leigh Hunt. He quoted Keats's statement of the function of poetry in *Sleep and Poetry* and observed:

But remember that there is a sublimer height to which the spirit of the muse may soar; and that her arm is able to uphold the adamant shield of virtue, and guard the soul from those insinuating sentiments, so fatally inculcated by many of the most popular writers of the day, equally repugnant both to reason and religion, which, if they touch us with their poisoned points, will contaminate our purity, inoculate us with degeneracy and corruption, and overthrow among us the dominion of domestic peace and public liberty.

Religion and the love of virtue are not inconsistent with the character of poet; they should shine like the moon upon his thoughts, direct the course of his enquiries, and illuminate his reflections upon mankind. We consider that the specimens here presented to our readers, will establish our opinion of Mr. Keats's poetical imagination, but the mere luxuries of imagination, more especially in the possession of the proud egotist of diseased feelings and perverted principles, may become the ruin of a people — inculcate the falsest and most dangerous ideas of the condition of humanity — and refine us into the degeneracy of butterflies that perish in the deceitful glories of a destructive taper. These observations might be considered impertinent, were they applied to one who had discovered any incapacity for loftier flights — to one who could not appreciate the energies of Milton or of Shakespeare — to one who could not soar to the heights of poesy, — and ultimately hope to bind his brows with the glorious sunbeams of immortality.

Mathew, as this review shows, was remarkably serious, conservative, and didactic for a boy of 21 years of age. His sincere hostility to the system of poetry, morals, politics, and religion which Keats had learned from Hunt was colored by the bitterness of slighted friendship. His review, therefore, illuminates the evolution of Keats's poetry in 1815 and 1816.

Hunt's review, which I have already quoted and discussed in detail in my interpretation of Keats's poems, was published in *The Examiner* in three parts, the first on June 1, the second on July 6, and the third on July 13, 1817. His delay in publishing the review was due, I believe, to his glorious visit with Shelley in Marlow in April and May. He explained the principles of the new school of poetry, of which Keats was a disciple, and discussed his poems, interpreting and approving the censure of the school of Pope and the mingled praise and admonishment of the school of Wordsworth. Instead of placating critical opponents, he wrote a controversial review which was calculated to provoke them. The controversial character of the review, however, makes it an invaluable document in the history of Keats's poetry.

In the latter part of 1817, there appeared two reviews which were admonitory but neither brutal nor malicious. In the *Eclectic Re-*



view for September, the reviewer declared that the poet of *Sleep and Poetry* was "far gone, beyond the reach of the efficacy either of praise or censure, in affectation and absurdity," but regretted that "a young man of vivid imagination and fine talents should have fallen into so bad hands as to have been flattered into the resolution to publish verses, of which a few years hence he will be glad to escape from the remembrance." In the *Scots and Edinburgh Magazine* for October, the reviewer warned Keats against "the appalling doom which awaits the faults of mannerism or the ambition of a sickly refinement." Alluding to the school of Leigh Hunt, he continued: "If Mr. Keats does not forthwith cast off the uncleanness of this school, he will never make his way to the truest strain of poetry in which, taking him by himself, it appears he might succeed." These critical admonitions were published too late, however, to have influenced Keats's rejection of Hunt's style. The malignant reviews in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* and *The Quarterly Review* did not appear until after the publication of *Endymion*.

## CHAPTER III

### ENDYMION

#### I. CRITICAL BACKGROUND

KEATS decided to compose a long romance upon the Greek myth of Endymion and Phoebe as early, we may infer, as the latter part of January 1817. On December 17, 1816 he referred to *I stood tip-toe upon a little hill* as "Endymion"; but in his *Poems*, which were published in the first week of March 1817 and which he doubtless gave to the printer by February 1, he printed this poem without title. He began the composition of *Endymion* about April 19 and completed it on November 28, 1817. In this period he was growing out of adolescence into manhood, and his whole being — his temperament, his character, his intellect, and his genius — was in a state of uncertainty, unrest, and conflict. He poured the ferment of his being into *Endymion*, analyzed it into its elements, and synthesized it into an objective whole.)

(The period in which Keats composed *Endymion* is the third major period of his poetry, the period in which he rejected Hunt's poetic system and wrought out an independent system of poetry from an intense and comprehensive study of Spenser, Shakespeare, Drayton, and other poets of the Renaissance.

In March 1817, as we have seen, Keats wavered between Hunt on one side and Haydon and Reynolds on the other. Haydon strove to destroy Hunt's influence upon Keats's opinions in religion, politics, morals, and poetry. He failed to convert Keats into a Christian but he allayed his iconoclasm. He failed also to convert Keats into a patriot but he made him take more pride in the Battle of Waterloo and have more respect for the Duke of Wellington. He was completely successful in making Keats distrust Hunt's moral principles and reject his poetic system. Hunt was conventionally moral in conduct, but he advocated Shelley's principles of free love and defended his conduct in marriage. We find the first evidence that Haydon warned Keats against Hunt's morals in the letter which he wrote him in the first part of March, within a day or two after the publication of the *Poems*.

My dear Keats, the Friends who surrounded me were sensible to what talent I had, — but no one reflected my enthusiasm with that burning ripeness of soul,

my heart yearned for sympathy,—believe me from my soul, in you I have found one,—you add fire, when I am exhausted, and excite fury afresh—I offer my heart and intellect and experience—at first I feared your ardor might lead you to disregard the accumulated wisdom of ages in moral points—but the feelings put forth lately have delighted my soul—always consider principle of more value than genius—and you are safe—because on the score of genius, you can never be vehement enough.<sup>1</sup>

On April 15, Haydon wrote Wordsworth:

When first I knew Leigh Hunt he was really a delightful fellow, ardent in virtue, and perceiving the right thing in everything but religion—he now finds “no end in wandering mazes lost,” perplexes himself, and pains his friends. His great error is inordinate personal vanity, and he who pampers it not is no longer received with affection. I am daily getting more estranged from him, and, indeed, all his old friends are dropping off.<sup>2</sup>

This letter gives us an intimation of Haydon’s censure of Hunt to Wordsworth, Keats, and others. The old friends who were drawing away from Hunt were Haydon, John Scott, Reynolds, and Keats.

On April 18, four days after he had left London, Keats wrote Reynolds:

Let me know particularly about Haydon, ask him to write to me about Hunt, if it be only ten lines—I hope all is well—

In the first part of May, Haydon wrote Keats:

I love you like my own brother. Beware, for God’s sake, of the delusions and sophistications that are ripping up the talents and morality of our friend! He will go out of the world the victim of his own weakness and the dupe of his own self-delusions, with the contempt of his enemies and the sorrow of his friends, and the cause he undertook to support injured by his own neglect of character.<sup>3</sup>

Keats replied to Haydon on May 10:

I wrote to Hunt yesterday—scarcely know what I said in it. I could not talk about Poetry in the way I should have liked for I was not in humor with either his or mine. His self delusions are very lamentable—they have inticed him into a Situation which I should be less eager after than that of a galley Slave—what you observe thereon is very true must be in time.

Perhaps it is a self delusion to say so—but I think I could not be deceived in the manner that Hunt is—may I die tomorrow if I am to be. There is no greater Sin after the seven deadly than to flatter oneself into an idea of being a great Poet—or one of those beings who are privileged to wear out their Lives in the pursuit of Honor—how comfortable a feel it is to feel that such a Crime

<sup>1</sup> H. B. Forman, *Variorum Edition*, Vol IV, p 8

<sup>2</sup> F. W. Haydon, *Benjamin Robert Haydon: Correspondence and Table-Talk*, London, 1876, Vol II, p 33.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, pp 2-3.

must bring its heavy Penalty? That if one be a Self-deluder accounts must be balanced?

Keats reacted against Hunt without giving up his friendship with him. When Blackwood's reviewers attacked Hunt with malicious scurrility and threatened to attack him as a disciple of Hunt, he observed to Haydon:

I know the miserable mistake I have ignorantly made in devoting myself to Leigh Hunt; but he is not selfish and I'll not shrink now that he is in trouble.

He gave the most complete expression of his reaction against Hunt in the letter which he wrote his brother George at the end of 1818:

The Night we went to Novello's there was a complete set to of Mozart and punning I was so completely tired of it that if I were to follow my own inclinations I should never meet any one of that set again, not even Hunt who is certainly a pleasant fellow in the main when you are with him — but in reality he is vain, egotistical, and disgusting in matters of taste and in morals. He understands many a beautiful thing, but then, instead of giving other minds credit for the same degree of perception as he himself professes — he begins an explanation in such a curious manner that our taste and self-love is offended continually. Hunt does one harm by making fine things petty and beautiful things hateful. Through him I am indifferent to Mozart, I care not for white Busts — and many a glorious thing when associated with him becomes a nothing. This distorts one's mind — make[s] one's thoughts bizarre — perplexes one in the standard of Beauty.

Keats's reaction against Hunt occurred, I believe, in the first part of April 1817, after Hunt had left Hampstead to visit Shelley in Marlow. When he reacted against Hunt, he became ashamed of the episode of the intercoronation and he composed his apologetic *Ode to Apollo*. He expressed his shame in a letter which he wrote his brother George in the "spring," shortly after he had begun *Endymion*. "I put on no Laurels till I shall have finished *Endymion*," he said, "and I hope Apollo is not angered at my having made a Mockery at him at Hunt's —." This statement proves that he had composed the ode by the spring of 1817. He wrote it before he began *Endymion*, I believe, for, after he began this long romance, he abstained rigorously from composing short poems. He gave copies of the ode, I presume, to those persons who would sympathize with it — his brothers, George and Tom, and his friends, Haydon and Reynolds. George Keats gave an autograph manuscript of it to the editor of *The Western Messenger* of Louisville, Kentucky, who published it in the magazine in May 1836. Woodhouse transcribed the ode in his Scrap-book, his Commonplace Book, and his Book of Transcripts. He said, in his Book of Transcripts, that he copied it

"from a MS. in Keats's writing." In November 1820 he compared his copy of the ode with the copy in Reynolds' manuscript volume of poems. "I see," he wrote Taylor on November 23, 1820, that "he [Reynolds] entitles the 'Ode to Apollo' a fragment —." I quote the transcript in Woodhouse's Scrap-book:

## ODE TO APOLLO

## I

God of the golden Bow!  
And of the golden Lyre!  
And of the golden hair!  
And of the golden fire!  
Charioteer  
Round the patient year!  
Where? where slept thine ire,  
When, like a blank ideot, I put on thy wreath,  
Thy laurel — thy glory  
The light of thy story?  
Or was I a worm too low-creeping for death?  
Oh Delphic Apollo? —

## 2

The Thunderer grasp'd & grasp'd,  
The Thunderer frowned & frown'd,  
The Eagle's feathery mane  
For wrath became stiffened — the sound  
Of breeding Thunder  
Went drowsily under,  
Muttering to be unbound —  
Oh! why didst thou pity, & beg for a worm?  
Why touch thy soft lute,  
Till the thunder was mute:  
Why was I not crush'd — such a pitiful germ,  
Oh Delphic Apollo? —

## 3

The Pleiads were up,  
Watching the silent air;  
The seeds & roots in Earth  
Were swelling for summer fare;  
The ocean, its old neighbour,  
Was at his old labour;  
When — who? who did dare  
To tie, for a moment, thy plant round his brow;  
And grin, — and look proudly —  
And blaspheme so loudly —  
And live, for that Honor to stoop to thee now?  
O Delphic Apollo? —

Keats declined Shelley's invitation to accompany Hunt to Marlow. He was resolving to work out an independent style of poetry, and he was afraid that he would be influenced by Shelley and Hunt. Since he was discarding Hunt's style, he was unwilling also to live in the same house with him. He accepted Haydon's advice to retire into the country to compose *Endymion*. In a letter postmarked March 17, 1817, he wrote Reynolds:

My Brothers are anxious that I should go by myself into the country — they have always been extremely fond of me, and now that Haydon has pointed out how necessary it is that I should be alone to improve myself, they give up the temporary pleasure of living with me continually for a great good which I hope will follow. So I shall soon be out of Town.

Advising Reynolds to conserve his health, he adapted Falstaff's speech in defense of himself (1 *Henry IV*, II. iv. 528-535):

Banish money — Banish sofas — Banish Wine — Banish Music; but right Jack Health, honest Jack Health, true Jack Health — Banish Health and banish all the world.

Keats left London on Monday evening, April 14, travelled all night by coach, "three stages outside and the rest in for it began to be very cold," and arrived in Southampton at an early hour next morning. After he had eaten his breakfast, he walked down to Southampton Water, engaged his passage on the boat to the Isle of Wight, returned to the inn, and wrote a letter to his brothers. He described with vivid detail his impressions of the towns and fields through which he had ridden on the coach in the night. "I saw . . . a little Wood," he said, "with trees look you like Launce's Sister 'as white as a Lilly and as small as a Wand'" — a quotation from *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. He had been loth to leave his friends and, when he arrived in Southampton, he was homesick. "I felt rather lonely this Morning at breakfast," he said, "so I went and unboxed a Shakespeare — There's my comfort," he added, adapting a phrase from *The Tempest*. "You, Haydon, Reynolds etc.," he continued, "have been pushing each other out of my Brain by turns — I have conned over every Head in Haydon's Picture [Christ's Entry into Jerusalem] — you must warn them not to be afraid should my Ghost visit them on Wednesday —."

Tuesday afternoon, after he had written the letter to his brothers, he travelled by boat to Cowes, Isle of Wight, and by coach to Newport, where he passed the night at the inn. On Wednesday, April 16, he visited Shanklin and Carisbrooke, and, after considering their respective merits as places of residence, he took lodgings at Mrs.

Cook's, New Village, Carisbrooke. Mrs. Cook's house has been identified as Canterbury House in Castle Road (formerly known as New Village). He began a letter to Reynolds on Thursday morning, April 17, and finished it on Friday morning, April 18.

Ever since I wrote to my Brothers from Southampton [he said] I have been in a taking, and at this moment I am about to become settled, for I have unpacked my books, put them into a snug corner, pinned up Haydon, Mary Queen [of] Scotts, and Milton with his daughters in a row. In the passage I found a head of Shakespeare which I had not before seen. It is most likely the same that George spoke so well of, for I like it extremely. Well — this head I have hung over my Books, just above the three in a row, having first discarded a french Ambassador — now this alone is a good morning's work.

Two of his books, to judge by quotations in this letter, were a Spenser and a Shakespeare. The independent style of poetry which he was developing was based upon an intensive study of Shakespeare's plays. Born in the midst of the romantic revival of Elizabethan literature, he had grown up with a reverence for Shakespeare. While he was a student in the Clarke School, he revealed to Edward Holmes his superstitious fear of reading *Macbeth* alone in a house at two o'clock in the morning; and once, while he was serving his apprenticeship to the surgeon in Edmonton, his eyes filled with tears and his voice faltered, Clarke said, as he read a pathetic scene in *Cymbeline*. In the first period of his poetry, however, he was too immature to understand and appreciate Shakespeare's plays. In his juvenile poems, indeed, there are only a very few reminiscences of Shakespeare.

In the summer of 1815, Keats began to read *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the first play which he really assimilated. The system of nature poetry which he learned from Hunt was derived in part from Shakespeare's fantasy of the fairies. When he became a member of Hunt's coterie in the fall and winter of 1816, he associated with a group of men — Hunt, Hazlitt, Haydon, Shelley, and Reynolds — who were enthusiastic, almost idolatrous, students of Shakespeare. In this second period of his poetry he acquired a wider knowledge of Shakespeare's plays. In the poems which he composed from October 1815 to January 1817, there are reminiscences of *Venus and Adonis*, *The Rape of Lucrece*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *Cymbeline*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard II*, *Hamlet*, and *King Lear*.

In January, February, and March of 1817, Keats read Shakespeare's plays with Haydon, who, possessing the forcefulness of the heroic artists of the Renaissance but lacking their creative genius,

made him appreciate for the first time the richness, the intensity, and the vigor of Shakespeare's poetry. He accompanied Haydon to see the Elgin Marbles on the first or third day of March, and in his sonnet *On seeing the Elgin Marbles* he employed for the first time an elevated style which was influenced by that of Shakespeare's sonnets.

Before he retired into the country to compose *Endymion*, Keats decided to develop an independent system of poetry out of an intensive study of Shakespeare's plays. Miss Spurgeon<sup>4</sup> discovered in the library of George Armour of Princeton, New Jersey, the copy of Shakespeare's plays which Keats bought for this purpose and took with him into the country. It is a copy of *The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare*, in seven volumes, printed by C. Whittingham, Chiswick, 1814. Whittingham printed the text and the notes of the edition of Johnson and Steevens. In the two first volumes of his copy, Keats wrote his name and the date of his purchase of the volumes: "John Keats, April, 1817." There are a very few brief annotations in these volumes, but there is a great deal of under-scoring and marginal markings. *The Tempest*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Measure for Measure*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Winter's Tale*, Miss Spurgeon said, are the plays which are most marked. *Hamlet* is well marked and *Pericles*, though it has only one marking, has been well read. *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Twelfth Night*, *Much Ado*, *As You Like It*, and *All's Well that Ends Well*, all of which have some markings, have been well read. *Romeo and Juliet*, *King Lear*, and *Othello* are unmarked but appear from the wear of the paper to have been well read.

Keats inspired his brothers with his own enthusiasm for Shakespeare's plays. When he left London, his brothers moved their lodgings from 76 Cheapside, London, to 1 Well Walk, Hampstead. In a letter to Severn, postmarked May 22, 1817, George Keats said:

The *Midsummer Night's Dream* is the masterpiece of fanciful Poetry — no exception — Oh, yes, *The Tempest*, one! I have read them both since I have been here [in Hampstead], all in green Fields, under green Hedges, and upon green Mounts, surrounded by nature in her prettiest dress, decked in the flowers of Spring. One may say with truth that Shakespeare carries you where he pleases, but the quicker the senses the more he is enjoyed — and how the free air of the hills quickens the Brain, I can witness. I did not know our grand, awful Bard till now, but now he comes upon me with all his light, darkening the name of every other votary in proportion. . . .

<sup>4</sup> Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, *Keats's Shakespeare*, Oxford: University Press, 1928.



*A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*, the two plays which George Keats was reading in this period, were the two first plays which Keats absorbed.

The markings and annotations in this copy of Shakespeare's plays and the allusions and quotations in his letters show that he studied the plays with the combined passions of the scholar, the poet, and the worshiper in a religious cult. Seeking the principles of Shakespeare's art, he absorbed particular passages, reacted to them imaginatively, studied the comments of editors and critics upon them, and discussed them with his friends.

I'll tell you what [he wrote Reynolds on April 18] — on the 23<sup>rd</sup> was Shakespeare born — now if I should receive a Letter from you and another from my Brothers on that day 'twould be a parlous good thing. Whenever you write say a word or two on some Passage in Shakespeare that may have come rather new to you; which must be continually happening, notwithstanding that we read the same Play forty times — for instance, the following, from the *Tempest*, never struck me so forcibly as at present,

Urchins

*Shall, for that vast of night that they may work,  
All exercise on thee —*

How can I help bringing to your mind the Line —  
*In the dark backward and abysm of time.*

Particular passages such as these, associated with his impressions of particular natural scenes, enkindled his creative imagination. In this letter which he wrote Reynolds on April 17 and 18, he quoted the sonnet *On the Sea* and described the occasion of its inspiration.

Yesterday [April 16] I went to Shanklin, which occasioned a great debate in my Mind whether I should live there or at Carisbrooke. Shanklin is a most beautiful place — sloping wood and meadow ground reaches round the Chine, which is a cleft between the Cliffs of the depth of nearly 300 feet at least. This cleft is filled with trees and bushes in the narrow part, and as it widens becomes bare, if it were not for primroses on one side, which spread to the very verge of the Sea, and some fishermen's huts on the other, perched midway in the Ballustrades of beautiful green Hedges along their steps down to the sands. — But the sea, Jack, the sea — the little waterfall — then the white cliff — then St. Catherine's Hill — "the sheep in the meadows, the cows in the corn."

Keats was reading *King Lear* at this time and he associated his sight of the sea from Shanklin Cliffs with Edgar's description of the sea from Dover Cliffs. Edgar, pretending to lead his blind father to the verge of the cliff, said:

Hark, do you hear the sea? . . .

How fearful

And dizzy 'tis, to cast one's eyes so low!

The crows and choughs that wing the midway air

Show scarce so gross as beetles    Half way down  
 Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade!  
 Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.  
 The fishermen, that walk upon the beach,  
 Appear like mice; and yond tall anchoring bark,  
 Diminish'd to her cock; her cock, a buoy  
 Almost too small for sight    The murmuring surge,  
 That on the unnumb'ed idle pebbles chafes,  
 Cannot be heard so high    I'll look no more,  
 Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight  
 Topple down headlong

Describing to Reynolds the effect which this passage had upon his imagination, Keats said:

From want of regular rest, I have been rather *nervous* — and the passage in Lear — “Do you not hear the sea?” — has haunted me intensely.

There is no extant autograph either of the letter containing the sonnet or of the sonnet alone. Maurice Buxton Forman, the latest editor of Keats's letters, printed the letter from a transcript in Woodhouse's *Book of Transcripts of Keats's Letters*. The version of the sonnet in the printed letter is a later version than that which Reynolds published in *The Champion* for August 17, 1817, and therefore, I presume, later than that which Keats wrote in the original letter to Reynolds. I quote the version which Reynolds published in *The Champion*:

#### SONNET.

#### ON THE SEA.

It keeps eternal whisperings around  
 Desolate shores, — and with its mighty swell,  
 Gluts twice ten thousand caverns, — till the spell  
 Of Hecate leaves them their old shadowy sound.  
 Often 'tis in such gentle temper found,  
 That scarcely will the very smallest shell  
 Be lightly moved, from where it sometime fell,  
 When last the winds of heaven were unbound.  
 [O] Ye, that have your eye-balls vex'd and tired,  
 Feast them upon the wideness of the sea; —  
 Or are your hearts disturb'd with uproar rude,  
 Or fed too much with cloying melody, —  
 Sit ye near some old cavern's mouth, and brood  
 Until ye start, as [if] the sea nymphs quired!

The omission of “O” at the beginning of verse nine and “if” in the middle of verse fourteen was, I presume, a typographical error. Woodhouse transcribed the sonnet also in his *Scrap-book*, *Commonplace Book*, and *Book of Transcripts*. He examined the version

which Reynolds transcribed in his Copy-book and wrote Taylor that Reynolds' version differed from his and that perhaps Reynolds transcribed his version from memory! The version in Woodhouse's Scrap-book differs from that which Reynolds printed in *The Champion* in having "O" at the beginning of verse nine, "as if" for "as" in verse fourteen, and "with too much cloying melody" for "too much with cloying melody" in verse twelve. The latest and the best version of the sonnet is that which was published by Lord Houghton in 1848 in his *Literary Remains of John Keats* and which has been reprinted in all succeeding editions of Keats's poems.

The sonnet *On the Sea* is a fine example of creative inspiration. It has no detail of the particular view of the sea which Keats saw from Shanklin Cliffs and likewise no detail of Shakespeare's description of the sea from Dover Cliffs. Shakespeare's phrase, "Do you not hear the sea?" which haunted Keats's imagination intensely, lifted him out of the particular impressions of the sea from Shanklin Cliffs into an intuition of the universal sea, which, whispering eternally around the shores of the world, refreshes and ennobles the souls of men. Shakespeare's plays, the Elgin Marbles, and the sea — these three in turn comforted and elevated Keats's spirit. Five months later, when he was at Oxford, he recalled the comforting power of the sea. Writing to Jane Reynolds, who was at the seashore, he said:

— in truth the great Elements we know of are no mean Comforters — the open Sky sits upon our senses like a Sapphire Crown — the Air is our Robe of State — the Earth is our throne and the Sea a mighty Minstrell playing before it — able like David's Harp to charm the evil Spirit from such Creatures as I am — able like Ariel's to make such a one as you forget almost the tempest-cares of Life. I have found in the Ocean's Musick — varying (though selfsame) more than the passion of Timotheus, an enjoyment not to be put into words and "though inland far I be" I now hear the voice most audibly. . . .

Keats began the composition of *Endymion* within two or three days after he composed the sonnet *On the Sea*. In the letter to Reynolds, April 18, he said: "— I shall forthwith begin my *Endymion*, which I hope I shall have got some way into by the time you come, when we will read our verses in a delightful place I have set my heart upon near the Castle —." After staying one week in Carisbrooke, however, and without waiting for Reynolds to come, he departed to Margate. On May 10 he wrote Hunt: "I began my Poem about a Fortnight since and have done some every day except travelling ones —."

Keats did not compose *Endymion* at random. He worked out the whole plan of the poem before he composed a single verse. He in-

vented the episodes, arranged them into four groups, and thought out the allegory. The whole poem, he decided, should consist of 4000 verses. He set for himself also a schedule of composition. By composing 50 verses a day, he estimated, he could complete the poem by autumn. In the introduction which he composed in Margate in the latter part of April, he symbolized the progress of the composition of the poem in the progress of the seasons.

. . . I will begin  
 Now while I cannot hear the city's din;  
 Now while the early budders are just new,  
 And run in mazes of the youngest hue  
 About old forests; while the willow trails  
 Its delicate amber, and the dairy pails  
 Bring home increase of milk. And, as the year  
 Grows lush in juicy stalks, I'll smoothly steer  
 My little boat, for many quiet hours,  
 With streams that deepen freshly into bowers  
 Many and many a verse I hope to write,  
 Before the daisies, vermeil rimm'd and white,  
 Hide in deep herbage; and ere yet the bees  
 Hum about globes of clover and sweet peas,  
 I must be near the middle of my story.  
 O may no wintry season, bare and hoary,  
 See it half finished: but let Autumn bold,  
 With universal tinge of sober gold,  
 Be all about me when I make an end.

In the week which he passed in Carisbrooke, Keats strained his physical and mental faculties to the breaking point. He read Shakespeare, composed the sonnet *On the Sea*, thought out his poetic principles, and began the composition of *Endymion*. He was absorbed continuously in exhausting mental labor without the relaxation of social intercourse. In the letter to Reynolds, April 18, he said:

I find that I cannot exist without poetry — without eternal poetry — half the day will not do — the whole of it — I began with a little, but habit has made me a Leviathan. I had become all in a Tremble from not having written any thing of late — the Sonnet over leaf [*On the Sea*] did me some good. I slept the better last night for it — this Morning, however, I am nearly as bad again.

In the letter to Hunt, May 10, he summed up his reasons for leaving Carisbrooke in vivid, disjointed sentences:

I went to the Isle of Wight — thought so much about Poetry so long together that I could not get to sleep at night — and moreover, I know not how it was, I could not get wholesome food — By this means in a Week or so I became not over capable in my upper Stories, and set off pell mell for Margate, at least 150 Miles, because forsooth I fancied that I should like my old Lodging here,

and could contrive to do without Trees. Another thing I was too much in Solitude, and consequently was obliged to be in continual burning of thought as an only resource. However Tom is with me at present, and we are very comfortable. We intend though to get among some Trees.

His brothers were alarmed by the tone of the letters which he wrote them from Carisbrooke. Tom joined him in Margate to relieve him of his loneliness and George went to Haydon for advice. Haydon wrote Keats a letter which encouraged and inspired him.

I think you did quite right to leave the Isle of Wight if you felt no relief; and being quite alone, after study you can now devote your eight hours a-day with just as much seclusion as ever. Do not give way to any forebodings. They are nothing more than the over-eager anxieties of a great spirit stretched beyond its strength, and then relapsing for a time to languid inefficiency. Every man of great views is, at times, thus tormented, but begin again where you left off without hesitation or fear. *Trust in God* with all your might. . . . I am always in trouble, and wants, and distresses; here I *found a refuge*. . . . I always rose up from my knees with a refreshed fury, an iron-clenched firmness, a crystal piety of feeling that sent me streaming on with a repulsive power against the troubles of life.<sup>5</sup>

This letter proves that Haydon advised and encouraged Keats to develop his poetic principles out of a study of Shakespeare's plays. After warning Keats against Hunt's "delusions and sophistications," he concluded:

God bless you, my dear Keats! do not despair; collect incident, study character, read Shakespeare, and trust in Providence, and you *will* do, you must.

On May 11 Keats replied:

I never quite despair and I read Shakespeare — indeed I shall I think never read any other Book much. Now this might lead me into a long Confab but I desist. I am very near agreeing with Hazlitt that Shakespeare is enough for us.

Haydon, who had unbounded ambition and inexhaustible confidence, helped Keats to acquire the Greek virtue of magnanimity which inspired the poets and painters of the Renaissance. The magnanimous man, Aristotle said in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, has great virtues, deserves great fame, lays claim to great fame, and is incited by his love of fame to do great deeds.

In Hunt's coterie Keats had lived in the fool's paradise of vain-glory. Playing with the superficial ornaments of poetry, he had chatted about Apollo's glories, crowned himself with laurel, and composed sentimental, complimentary verses. When he saw the Elgin Marbles with Haydon and when he read Shakespeare's plays, he

<sup>5</sup> F. W. Haydon, *Benjamin Robert Haydon: Correspondence and Table-Talk*, Vol. II, p. 2.

was overwhelmed and discouraged. Each imagined pinnacle and steep of godlike hardship, he said, told him that he must die like a sick eagle looking at the sky. Writing Hunt on May 10, he said:

— I have asked myself so often why I should be a Poet more than other Men, — seeing how great a thing it is, — how great things are to be gained by it, what a thing to be in the Mouth of Fame — that at last the Idea has grown so monstrously beyond my seeming Power of attainment that the other day I nearly consented with myself to drop into a Phaeton — yet 'tis a disgrace to fail even in a huge attempt, and at this moment I drive the thought from me.

The "truth is," he wrote Haydon on May 10,

I have been in such a state of Mind as to read over my Lines and hate them. I am one that "gathers Samphire, dreadful trade" — the Chiff of Poesy towers above me — yet when Tom who meets with some of Pope's Homer in Plutarch's Lives reads some of those to me they seem like Mice to mine.

At the same time, since he possessed great virtues, the great art which he was studying inspired him to win fame by composing a great poem. Announcing to Reynolds his intention of beginning the composition of *Endymion* forthwith, he quoted Spenser's expression of magnanimity:

The noble Heart that harbors virtuous thought,  
And is with Child of glorious great intent,  
Can never rest, until it forth have brought  
Th' eternal Brood of Glory excellent —

[*F. Q.*, I. v. i. 1-4.]

Replying to Haydon's letter of encouragement, he quoted the expression of magnanimity with which Shakespeare began *Love's Labour's Lost*:

Let Fame, that all pant after in their lives,  
Live register'd upon our brazen tombs,  
And so grace us in the disgrace of death:  
When spite of cormorant devouring time  
The endeavour of this present breath may buy  
That Honor which shall bate his Scythe's keen edge  
And make us heirs of all eternity.

To think that I have no right to couple myself with you in this speech would be death to me, so I have e'en written it, and I pray God that our "brazen tombs" be nigh neighbours. . . . I must think that difficulties nerve the Spirit of a Man — they make our Prime Objects a Refuge as well as a Passion. The Trumpet of Fame is as a tower of Strength, the ambitious bloweth it and is safe.

Keats learned from Haydon, who sacrificed everything for his painting, that those who would climb the pinnacle of fame in art must "scorn delights," as Milton said, "and live laborious days."

I know no one but you [he told Haydon] who can be fully sensible of the turmoil and anxiety, the sacrifice of all what is called comfort, the readiness to measure time by what is done and to die in six hours could plans be brought to conclusions — the looking upon the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, the Earth and its contents, as materials to form greater things — that is to say ethereal things — but here I am talking like a Madman, — greater things than our Creator himself made!!

Keats stated, in this passage, his new theory of the function of the poet — “the looking upon the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, the Earth and its contents, as materials to form greater things — that is to say ethereal things —.” This theory, we shall see later, was the basis of the allegory of the second book of *Endymion*. It represents a great advance in aesthetic thought beyond that theory which Keats had learned from Hunt and which he had expressed in *Sleep and Poetry*.

Keats learned from Haydon also a variation of the Platonic theory of demonic inspiration. Replying to Haydon's exhortation to begin again where he left off without hesitation or fear, he said:

Thank God! I do begin arduously where I leave off, notwithstanding occasional depressions; and I hope for the support of a High Power while I climb this little eminence, and especially in my Years of more momentous Labor. I remember your saying that you had notions of a good Genius presiding over you. I have of late had the same thought, for things which [I] do half at Random are afterwards confirmed by my judgment in a dozen features of Propriety Is it too daring to fancy Shakespeare this Presider? When in the Isle of Wight I met with a Shakespeare in the Passage of the House at which I lodged — it comes nearer to my idea of him than any I have seen — I was but there a Week, yet the old woman made me take it with me though I went off in a hurry. Do you not think this is ominous of good?

Haydon and Keats meant that they were inspired rather than that they were possessed by the spirits of the “mighty dead.” The sonnet *On the Sea* is a fine example of the way in which Shakespeare “presided over” or inspired Keats.

Keats filled his letter to Haydon with quotations from Shakespeare. Referring to Haydon's review of a manuscript which was supposed to have been written by Bonaparte, he said:

It was very gratifying to meet your remarks on the manuscript — I was reading Anthony and Cleopatra when I got the Paper [*The Examiner* for May 4] and there are several Passages applicable to the events you commentate.

Keats had thought out also the more practical principles of genre, versification, and diction. In January 1817, as I have already mentioned, he was exhorted by Haydon to undertake the composition

of a long poem, and he was warned by Hunt that long poems are inappropriate in modern poetry. He explained the whole problem in a letter which he wrote Bailey on October 8, 1817.

Haydon and Hunt have known each other many years — now they live pour ainsi dire jealous Neighbours. Haydon says to me Keats dont show your Lines to Hunt on any account or he will have done half for you — so it appears Hunt wishes it to be thought When he met Reynolds in the Theatre, John told him that I was getting on to the completion of 4000 Lines. Ah! says Hunt, had it not been for me they would have been 7000! If he will say this to Reynolds what would he to other People? Haydon received a Letter a little while back on this subject from some Lady — which contains a caution to me through him on this subject — Now is not all this a most paultry thing to think about? You may see the whole of the case by the following extract from a Letter I wrote to George in the Spring —

Keats wrote this letter to his brother George in the first part of May, I presume, after he had thought out his poetic principles in Carisbrooke and after he had begun *Endymion*. In ideas and phraseology the extract is closely related to the letter which he wrote to Haydon on May 10. I quote the extract in full.

As to what you say about my being a Poet, I can return no answer but by saying that the high Idea I have of poetical fame makes me think I see it towering to[o] high above me. At any rate I have no right to talk until *Endymion* is finished — it will be a test, a trial of my Powers of Imagination and chiefly of my invention which is a rare thing indeed — by which I must make 4000 Lines of one bare circumstance and fill them with Poetry, and when I consider that this is a great task, and that when done it will take me but a dozen paces towards the Temple of Fame — it makes me say — God forbid that I should be without such a task! I have heard Hunt say and [I] may be asked — why endeavour after a long Poem? To which I should answer — Do not the Lovers of Poetry like to have a little Region to wander in where they may pick and choose, and in which the images are so numerous that many are forgotten and found new in a second Reading: which may be food for a Week's stroll in the Summer? Do not they like this better than what they can read through before M<sup>rs</sup> Williams comes down stairs? a Morning work at most. Besides a long Poem is a test of Invention which I take to be the Polar Star of Poetry, as Fancy is the Sails, and Imagination the Rudder. Did our great Poets ever write short Pieces? I mean in the shape of Tales — This same invention seems indeed of late Years to have been forgotten as a Poetical excellence. But enough of this, I put on no Laurels till I shall have finished *Endymion*, and I hope Apollo is not angered at my having made a Mockery at him at Hunt's.

Keats rejected the genre of the short romance which Hunt advocated and composed *Endymion* in the genre of the long romance of Renaissance poets. "Did our great Poets ever write short Pieces? I mean in the shape of Tales." Like *The Faerie Queene* and *Britannia's Pastorals*, which were Keats's chief models, *Endymion* is "a



little region to wander in" in which the images are so numerous that they obscure the thread of the story.

After he had quoted this extract, Keats continued:

You see Bailey how independant my writing has been. Hunts dissuasion was of no avail — I refused to visit Shelley, that I might have my own unfettered scope — and after all I shall have the Reputation of Hunt's elev  . His corrections and amputations will by the knowing ones be traced in the Poem. This is to be sure the vexation of a day — nor would I say so many Words about it to any but those whom I know to have my welfare and Reputation at Heart —

Keats made a less striking change in versification than in any other element of his poetry. The heroic couplets of *Endymion* differ only slightly from those of *I stood tip-toe upon a little hill* and *Sleep and Poetry*. Instead of imitating Hunt's couplets, he imitated the couplets of some of Hunt's masters in versification, Browne, Fletcher, Drayton, and Chapman. The change in his versification consisted in the choice of words rather than in the structure of the verse. He avoided as far as he could those words by which Hunt produced lively, sprightly, jaunty, and tumbling qualities of verse. He avoided also those words by which Hunt produced sweet, luscious qualities. In the sonnet *On the Sea* he advised those persons whose ears were "fed too much with cloying melody" to sit near some old cavern's mouth and hear the sea nymphs sing.

Keats explained his principle of diction in *Endymion* in a letter which he wrote to his brothers on January 23, 1818.

Leigh Hunt I showed my 1 Book to — he allows it not much merit as a whole; says it is unnatural and made ten objections to it in the mere skimming over. He says the conversation is unnatural and too high-flown for Brother and Sister — says it should be simple, forgetting do ye mind that they are both overshadowed by a supernatural Power, and of force could not speak like Franchesca in the "Rimini." He must first prove that Caliban's poetry is unnatural. This with me completely overturns his objections. The fact is he and Shelley are hurt, and perhaps justly, at my not having showed them the affair officiously; and from several hints I have had they appear much disposed to dissect and anatomize any trip or slip I may have made. — But who's afraid? Aye! Tom! Demme if I am.

Keats took the imaginative, erudite, elevated, inclusive diction of Shakespeare's poetry as his model. He borrowed words lavishly from Spenser, Shakespeare, Jonson, Chapman, Drayton, Fletcher, Browne, Sandys, Milton, and other poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He endeavored to discard, as Hunt was quick to see, the familiar, colloquial diction which he had learned from Hunt; but he could not free his poetry immediately from a diction which was deeply embedded in his habits of thought. The diction

of *Endymion*, therefore, is an incongruous mixture of the artificial and the natural, the erudite and the colloquial, the elevated and the low, and the obsolete and the recent. The worst defects of the poem are defects of diction and versification.

In the two first weeks of his residence in Margate, Keats composed probably a considerable portion of the first book of *Endymion*. His inspiration was stifled, however, by financial vexations. "This Morning," he wrote Haydon on May 11, "I received a letter from George by which it appears that Money Troubles are to follow us up for some time to come — perhaps for always —." "So now," he added, "I revoke my Promise of finishing my Poem by the Autumn which I should have done had I gone on as I have done — but I cannot write while my spirit is fevered in a contrary direction . . ." His immediate needs were relieved by a loan of £20 from Taylor and Hessey, his publishers. "I hope soon to be able to resume my Work," he wrote them on May 16. "I have endeavoured to do so once or twice but to no Purpose — instead of Poetry — I have a swimming in my head — And feel all the effects of a Mental Debauch — lowness of Spirits — anxiety to go on without the Power to do so, which does not at all tend to my ultimate Progression — However tomorrow I will begin my next Month."

Losing his inspiration in Margate, Keats sought it in Canterbury. He wrote Taylor and Hessey on May 16:

This Evening I go to Canterbury — having got tired of Margate — I was not right in my head when I came — At Cant<sup>y</sup> I hope the Remembrance of Chaucer will set me forward like a Billiard-Ball. . . . I have some idea of seeing the Continent some time in the summer —

In his dissatisfaction with Margate we can trace the interrelation of his experience and his poetry. When he visited Margate in August 1816, he was happy in his first experience of the sea; but, when he returned to Margate in the latter part of April 1817, he had already satisfied his passion for the sea in the Isle of Wight. In the letter to Hunt, May 10, he called Margate a "treeless affair" and added "We intend though to get among some Trees." He desired trees to stimulate his imagination, for the setting of the first book of *Endymion*, which he was composing, was the mighty forest which covered the slopes of Mount Latmos.

None of the letters which Keats wrote from Canterbury is extant. The only reference to his sojourn in Canterbury is found, as Miss Lowell pointed out, in a letter from George Keats to Severn, dated Wednesday and postmarked May 22, 1817. George Keats reproved

the "complaining Severn" for fearing that Keats had forgotten him, discussed Severn's picture, *Hermia and Helena*, which was on exhibition, and invited Severn to visit him in Hampstead. He added in a postscript: "John and Tom are at Canterbury." In a second letter which he wrote Severn he again reproved him for complaining that he had been forgotten. Since this letter was written shortly after the first and since it was dated Tuesday, Miss Lowell suggested that it was written either on May 22 or on June 3. At the end of the letter he said:

John will be in town again soon. When he is, I will let you know and repeat my invitation. He sojourns at present at Bo Peep, near Hastings. Tom's remembrances, and my best wishes.

After Keats had completed the first book of *Endymion* in Canterbury, Miss Lowell<sup>6</sup> suggested, he went to Hastings for a brief but joyful vacation and his brother Tom returned to Hampstead. In Dilke's brief memoir of Keats there is a statement that "While *Endymion* was in progress J.K. visited Hastings, Oxford & I think the Isle of Wight —." Keats himself alluded twice to a lady with whom he had a mild flirtation at Hastings.

In the first week of June, Keats joined his brothers in their new lodgings in Well Walk, Hampstead. He wrote Taylor and Hessey on June 10, asking them for a loan of £30 to pay two pressing debts. "I am not desolate," he told his publishers, "but have thank God 25 good Notes in my fob — but then you know I laid them by to write with and would stand at Bay a fortnight ere they should grab me."

Keats composed the second book of *Endymion* in Hampstead in June, July, and August. He did not write letters in this period, for he was with his friends; but from other sources we know something of that part of his experience which had an influence upon his poetry. Hunt returned from his visit with Shelley at Marlow on Wednesday, June 25, resided for a week or two in Maida Hill, Paddington, and moved to 13 Lisson Grove North in the latter part of July. Keats avoided meeting him, for he was resolved to compose *Endymion* without his advice. Hunt wrote Clarke on July 1: "What has become of Junkets I know not. I suppose Queen Mab has eaten him." It would be illuminating to know Keats's reactions to the belated review of his *Poems* which Hunt published in *The Examiner* in three parts on June 1, July 6, and July 13. We see his desire to be independent of Hunt, however, in the publication of his sonnet *On*

<sup>6</sup> Amy Lowell, Vol. I, p. 463.

*the Sea* in *The Champion* on August 17. Hunt, perceiving that Keats was falling away from him, made a tactful advance by printing in *The Examiner* on September 21 the sonnets which they had written in emulation on the grasshopper and the cricket.

Keats associated most intimately with Haydon, Reynolds, Dilke, Brown, and Severn. Haydon was enthusiastic and confident, for he was making progress on his picture. In the first part of May he wrote Keats that he had painted Wordsworth's head into his picture and that he was eager to paint Keats's head. Keats posed for Haydon, I presume, in June and July. In the latter part of the summer Haydon moved from Marlborough Street to Lisson Grove North, where he had a larger painting-room; but, his eyes failing him, he departed on a visit to Oxford and Blenheim.

The letters which Keats wrote in the fall indicate that he had been more intimate with Reynolds in the summer than with anyone else except his brothers. He began to be intimate also with Dilke and Brown, who occupied adjoining apartments in Wentworth Place, a double house at the foot of John Street, Hampstead. Charles Brown, a young man 31 years of age, was living a life of literary leisure. He had failed in business with his brother John, an importer of Russian goods, but he had inherited a modest competence from his brother James, a resident of the East India Company. In 1814 he wrote a serio-comic opera, *Narensky, or the Road to Yaroslav*, which was performed at Drury Lane. He was a robust, full-fleshed, bald-headed young man, frank and jovial but shrewd and cautious. In his memoir of Keats he described the tactful means by which he won Keats's friendship. "I succeeded in making him come often to my house by never asking him to come oftener; and I let him feel himself at perfect liberty there chiefly by avoiding to assure him of the fact. He quickly became intimate."

Clarke related a few details of Keats's progress in the composition of *Endymion* in the summer of 1817.

I have an impression that he had been some weeks absent at the seaside before settling in this district [Well Walk, Hampstead]; for the "Endymion" had been begun, and he had made considerable advances in his plan. He came to me one Sunday, and we passed the greater part of the day walking in the neighbourhood. His constant and enviable friend, Severn, I remember, was present upon the occasion, by a little circumstance of our exchanging looks upon Keats reading to us portions of his new poem with which he himself had been pleased; and never will his expression of face depart from me. . . . One of his selections was the *now* celebrated "Hymn to Pan" in the first book. . . . And the other selections were the descriptions in the second book of the "bower of Adonis," and the ascent and descent of the silver car of Venus, air-borne. . . .

From Joseph Severn we receive the most vivid descriptions of Keats's imaginative reactions in the summer of 1817. "It was a delight to me," Severn said, "to stroll over to Well Walk across the fields from smoky London, to enjoy and profit by the brightness of his genius." Persistent in his diffident, plaintive way, Severn pretended that he came to Hampstead to seek backgrounds for the miniatures which he was painting. In a compilation of Severn's notes William Sharp<sup>7</sup> said:

(In some of the walks they took together Severn was astonished by his companion's faculty of observation. Nothing seemed to escape him, the song of a bird and the undernote of response from covert or hedge, the rustle of some animal, the changing of the green and brown lights and furtive shadows, the motions of the wind — just how it took certain tall flowers and plants — and the wayfaring of the clouds. even the features and gestures of passing tramps, the colour of one woman's hair, the smile on one child's face, the furtive animalism below the deceptive humanity in many of the vagrants. . .

Withal, even when in a mood of joyous observance, with flow of happy spirits, he would suddenly become taciturn, not because he was tired, not even because his mind was suddenly wrought to some bewitching vision, but from a profound disquiet which he could not or would not explain.

Certain things affected him extremely, particularly when "a wave was billowing through a tree," as he described the uplifting surge of air among swaying masses of chestnut or oak foliage, or when, afar off, he heard the wind coming across woodlands. "The tide! the tide!" he would cry delightedly, and spring on to some stile, or upon the low bough of a wayside tree, and watch the passage of the wind upon the meadow-grasses or young corn, not stirring till the flow of air was all around him, while an expression of rapture made his eyes gleam and his face glow till he "would look sometimes like a wild fawn waiting for some cry from the forest depths," or like "a young eagle staring with proud joy" before taking flight. . . .

The only thing that would bring Keats out of one of his fits of seeming gloomful reverie . . . was the motion "of the inland sea" he loved so well, particularly the violent passage of wind across a great field of barley. From fields of oats or barley, Severn declared once, it was almost impossible to allure him; he would stand, leaning forward, listening intently, watching with a bright serene look in his eyes and sometimes with a slight smile, the tumultuous passage of the wind above the grain. The sea, or thought-compelling images of the sea, always seemed to restor him to a happy calm. . . .

On September 3 Keats went to Oxford to visit Benjamin Bailey, the student of theology whom he had met through Reynolds in the latter part of March. He had intended to accompany his brothers to Paris, but the necessity of completing his poem held him in England. In the recollections which Bailey wrote for Lord Houghton on May 7, 1849 and in the letters which Keats wrote from Oxford,

<sup>7</sup> William Sharp, *Life and Letters of Joseph Severn*, pp. 20-21.

we have a full record of Keats's experiences while he was composing the third book of *Endymion*.

At the commencement of the long Vacation [Bailey said] I was again in London on my way to another part of the country; and it was my intention to return to Oxford early in the vacation for the purpose of reading I saw much of Keats. And I invited him to return with me to Oxford, and spend as much time as he could afford with me in the silence and solitude of that beautiful place during the absence of the numerous members and students of the University. He accepted my offer, and we returned together — I think in August 1817. It was during this visit, & in my room, that he wrote the third book of *Endymion* I think he had written the few first introductory lines which he read to me, before he became my guest. . . . [Bailey's letter to Lord Houghton, Houghton-Crewe Collection.]

Keats wrote a letter to his sister Fanny on September 10, a week after he had arrived in Oxford.

When I saw you last I told you of my intention of going to Oxford and 'tis now a Week since I disembark'd from his Whipship's Coach the Defiance in this place. I am living in Magdalen Hall on a visit to a young Man with whom I have not been long acquainted, but whom I like very much — we lead very industrious lives he in general Studies and I in proceeding at a pretty good rate with a Poem which I hope you will see early in the next year. . . . I shall stop here till I have finished the 3rd Book of my Story; which I hope will be accomplish'd in at most three Weeks from to day — about which time you shall see me.

Keats was delighted with the Gothic buildings and clear streams of Oxford.

This Oxford I have no doubt is the finest City in the world [he wrote his sister] — it is full of old Gothic buildings — Spires — towers — Quadrangles — Cloisters Groves etc. and is surrounded with more clear streams than ever I saw together. I take a Walk by the Side of one of them every Evening and thank God, we have not had a drop of rain these many days.

For these last five or six days [he wrote Reynolds on September 21], we have had regularly a Boat on the Isis, and explored all the streams about, which are more in number than your eye lashes. We sometimes skim into a Bed of rushes, and there become naturalized riverfolks, — there is one particularly nice nest which we have christened "Reynolds's Cove," in which we have read Wordsworth and talked as may be.

In this inspiring city, Keats composed the third book of *Endymion* within the time he had set. He wrote Reynolds on September 21:

I am getting on famous with my third Book — have written 800 lines thereof, and hope to finish it next Week. Bailey likes what I have done very much.

And he wrote Haydon on September 28:

You will be glad to hear that within these last three weeks I have written 1000 lines — which are the third Book of my Poem.

Bailey described Keats's method of composition as follows:

His mode of composition of the third Book, of which I was witness, is best described by recounting our habits of study for one day during the month he visited me at Oxford. He wrote, and I read, sometimes at the same table, & sometimes at separate desks or tables, from breakfast to the time of going out for exercise, — generally two or three o'clock. He sat down to his task, — which was about fifty lines a day, — with his paper before him, & wrote with as much regularity, and apparently with as much ease, as he wrote his letters. Indeed he quite acted up to the principle he lays down in the letter of axioms to his publisher, (my old and valued friend Mr. Taylor) on which you justly set the seal of your approbation — "That if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves of a tree, it had better not come at all." This axiom he fulfilled to the letter by his own practice, *me teste*, while he composed the third Book of *Endymion*, in the same room in which I studied daily, until he completed it. Sometimes he fell short of his allotted task, but not often; & he would make it up another day. But he never forced himself. When he had finished his writing for the day, he usually read it over to me, and he read or wrote letters until he went out for a walk. This was our habit day by day. The rough manuscript was written off daily, & with few erasures. [Bailey's letter to Lord Houghton.]

Bailey related also their excursions around Oxford. At the beginning of October they visited the birthplace of Shakespeare in Stratford.

When we had finished our studies for the day we took our walk, & sometimes boated on the Isis, as he describes these little excursions very graphically in a letter to Mr. Reynolds. And once we took a longer excursion of a day or two to Stratford, upon Avon, to visit the birthplace of Shakespeare. We went of course to the house visited by so many thousands of all nations of Europe, & inscribed our names in addition to the "numbers numberless" of those which literally blackened the walls; & if these walls have not been washed, or our names wiped out to find place for some others, they will still remain together upon that truly honoured wall of a small low attic apartment. We also visited the Church, & were pestered with a commonplace showman of the place. He was struck, I remember, with the simple statue there, which, though rudely executed, we agreed was probably the best likeness of the many extant, but none very authentic, of the myriad-minded Shakespeare. His enjoyment was of that genuine quiet kind which was a part of his gentle nature; deeply feeling what he truly enjoyed, but saying little. On our return to Oxford we renewed our quiet mode of life, until he finished the third Book of *Endymion*, & the time came that we must part; and I never parted with one whom I had known so short a time, with so much real regret & personal affection, as I did with John Keats, when he left Oxford for London at the end of September, or the beginning of October 1817.

[Bailey's letter to Lord Houghton]

Keats and Bailey wrote their names, Miss Lowell discovered, in the visitors' book of Holy Trinity Church in Stratford on October 2. Keats visited Stratford, therefore, after he had completed the third book of *Endymion*.

Bailey had a profound influence upon Keats's mind and poetry.

His influence upon particular poems, such as the third book of *Endymion* and the introduction to *The Fall of Hyperion, a Dream*, I shall analyze in the sections in which I interpret these poems. I shall quote and explain, in this connection, those parts of Keats's letters and Bailey's recollections which reveal the general character of Bailey's influence upon Keats. The sketch of Bailey's character which Keats wrote to Jane Reynolds on September 14 expresses his affection and admiration for Bailey and suggests certain philosophic principles which he was learning.

To your Brother John (whom henceforth I shall consider as mine) and to you my dear friends Marianne and Jane I shall ever feel grateful for having made known to me so real a fellow as Bailey. He delights me in the Selfish and (please God) the disinterested part of my disposition. If the old Poets have any pleasure in looking down at the Enjoyers of their Works, their eyes must bend with double satisfaction upon him. I sit as at a feast when he is over them and pray that if after my death any of my Labours should be worth saving, they may have as "honest a Chronicler" as Bailey. Out of this his Enthusiasm in his own pursuit and for all good things is of an exalted kind — worthy a more healthful frame and an untorn Spirit. He must have happy years to come — he shall not die by God —

We find in this passage the first allusion which Keats made in his letters to the philosophical problem of selfishness and disinterestedness or self-love and benevolence. Through the philosophy of the empirical philosophers of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, we can trace an increasing emphasis on the principle of the natural selfishness of the human mind. In 1805 Hazlitt published *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action: Being an Argument in favour of the Natural Disinterestedness of the Human Mind. To which are added, Some Remarks on the Systems of Harile and Helvetius*. Keats possessed a copy of Hazlitt's essay; and he accepted Hazlitt's thesis that men have disinterested as well as selfish natural impulses. From this time on he judged his friends by the criterion of disinterestedness.

The principle of disinterestedness which Keats was studying in Hazlitt's essay made him responsive and receptive to the humanitarian principles, especially the principle of universal benevolence, which Bailey preached to him. In the letters which he wrote to Bailey after he left Oxford, we find allusions to their humanitarian interests. They were concerned about the misfortunes of some family in Oxford; and they endeavored to raise a subscription for a young painter by the name of Cripps, to enable him to study under Haydon. As we shall see later, they discussed humanitarian principles, drawing these principles out of Wordsworth's *Excursion*.



The subjects of Bailey's speculations are indicated in a letter which he wrote Taylor on May 20, 1818, nine months after Keats visited him at Oxford. He desired Taylor to publish a series of speculative essays which he was writing.

I have written two long essays. One upon the Casual Principles the other upon the relative state of man & woman which is the longest & the best. I am upon the 3d — which is an enquiry into "What is Power." This & one upon "The Unity of Nations" are my greatest speculations. These 4 will contain a good deal of *space*, if not matter. I hope before the end of this month to have these 4 completed. "The Insufficiency of Language" — & "Considerations previous to reading an author," I have thought of following — & to end the whole of this "Eventful (or rather eventless) history" with my first essay on *Paradise Regained*, rewritten, an essay on "the moral beauty of poetry" and at last an essay upon Keats's poetry *alone*. Now if I complete all this, I think it will be worth publishing. This is saying too much perhaps — but unless I feel it so, I will not trouble my friends, & certainly not the public with it. I have abundance of matter, which makes it more difficult to throw my speculations into form than if I had infinitely less. Indeed I find it much more difficult than I expected. [Woodhouse's Scrap-book, Pierpont Morgan Library.]

Bailey, who was a voracious student, had gathered a mass of knowledge which his very ordinary mind could not assimilate. He never published — indeed, he never finished writing — the ambitious essays which he described to Taylor. He had the power, however, and the honor of stimulating Keats's speculative faculties and of introducing him to the philosophical problems of his day.

Keats was inspired by Bailey, also, to make a serious study of Dante's *Divine Comedy* (in Cary's translation), Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Wordsworth's *Excursion*. His study of these three poems was the poetic background, just as his study of humanitarianism and humanism was the philosophic background, of the two versions of *Hyperion*.

I was a great student of Milton when a young man [Bailey said]; & I yet possess Todd's edition, which has been 33 years upon my shelves, with passages marked in ink, & similar passages cited and referred to, & some MS notes. This edition Keats saw when he visited me. But, like Reynolds, he was then far more enamoured of the beauties of Spenser & the Faery Queen. The subsequent study of Milton gave his mind a mighty addition of energy & manly vigour, which stand out so nobly in *Hyperion*. As a known lover of Milton among my friends, he sent me those exquisite verses on Milton's hair. [Bailey's letter to Lord Houghton.]

Bailey described, in his recollections, Keats's attitude to Wordsworth in September 1817. In 1818, we shall see later, Keats corresponded with Bailey about Wordsworth's humanitarianism.

I had always been (at least from the year 1813) through good & through evil report, one among the few unflinching admirers of Mr. Wordsworth's poetry, now almost universally appreciated, but upon which as much (& yet more) foolish ridicule was poured, as upon Keats's. . . .

The following passage from Wordsworth's Ode on Immortality was deeply felt by Keats, who however at this time seemed to me to value this great poet rather in particular passages than in the full length portrait, as it were, of the great imaginative & philosophic Christian Poet, which he really is, and which Keats obviously, not long afterwards, felt him to be.

Not for these I raise  
The song of thanks & praise;  
But for those obstinate questionings  
Of sense and outward things,  
Fallings from us, vanishings;  
Blank misgivings of a creature  
Moving about in worlds not realised,  
*High instincts, before which our mortal nature*  
*Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised . . .*

The last lines he thought were quite awful in their application to a guilty finite creature, like man, in the appalling nature of the feeling which they suggested to a thoughtful mind.

Again we often talked of that noble passage in the Lines on Tintern Abbey: —

That blessed mood,  
In which *the burthen of the mystery*,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world  
Is lightened.

And his references to this passage are frequent in his letters. — But in those exquisite stanzas. —

She dwelt among the untrodden ways,  
Beside the springs of Dove —  
ending, —

She lived unknown & few could know  
When Lucy ceased to be;  
But she is in her grave, & oh,  
*The difference to me —*

the simplicity of the last line he declared to be the most perfect pathos.

Among the qualities of high poetic promise in Keats was, even at this time, his correct taste. I remember to have been struck with this by his remarks on that well known & often quoted passage of the Excursion upon the Greek Mythology, — where it is said that

Fancy fetched  
Even from the blazing chariot of the Sun  
A beardless youth who touched the golden lute,  
*And filled the illumined groves with ravishment*

Keats said this description of Apollo should have ended at the "Golden lute," & have left it to the imagination to complete the picture, — *how* he "filled the illumined groves." I think every man of taste will feel the justice of the remark. [Bailey's letter to Lord Houghton.]

Bailey remembered also Keats's admiration for Chatterton.

Every one now knows what was then known to his friends, that Keats was an ardent admirer of Chatterton. The melody of the verses of "the marvellous Boy who perished in his pride," enchanted the author of *Endymion*. Methinks I now hear him recite, or *chant*, in his peculiar manner, the following stanza of the "Roundelay sung by the minstrels of Ella": —

Come with acorn cup and thorn  
Drain my hertys blood away;  
Life and all its good I scorn;  
Dance by night or feast by day.

The first line to his ear possessed the great charm. Indeed his sense of melody was quite exquisite, and is apparent in his own verses; & in none more than in numerous passages of his *Endymion*. [Bailey's letter to Lord Houghton.]

Bailey attempted to recall and to illustrate Keats's principle of melody in verse.

One of his favorite topics of discourse was the principle of melody in verse, upon which he had his own notions, particularly in the management of open and close vowels. I think I have seen a somewhat similar theory attributed to Mr. Wordsworth. But I do not remember his laying it down in writing. Be this as it may, Keats's theory was worked out by himself. He was himself, as already observed, a master of melody, which may be illustrated by almost numberless passages of his poems. As an instance of this, I may cite a few lines of that most perfect passage of *Hyperion*, which has been quoted by more than one of your Reviewers — the picture of dethroned Saturn in his melancholy solitude. ✓  
Keats's theory was, that the vowels should be so managed as not to clash one with another so as to mar the melody, — & yet that they should be interchanged, like differing notes of music, to prevent monotony. The following lines will, I think, illustrate his theory, as I understood him.

Dēep īn thē shādy sādness ōf ā vāle,  
Fār sūnken from the hēalthy brēath of mōrn —  
Fār frōm thē flēry Nōōn & Ēve's ōne stār —  
Sāt grey haired Sātūrn, qūiet as a stōne,  
Stīll as the sīlence round about his lāir;  
Fōrest on fōrest hung about his hēad  
Like clōūd on clōūd.

These lines are exquisitely wrought into melody. They are beautifully carried in their vowel sounds, & able when the exception proves the rule, & monotony is a beauty; as in the prolonged breathing, as it were, of the similar vowels in

"healthy breath of morn," in which we almost inhale the freshness of the morning air; & in the vowel sounds repeated in the words — "Sāt grey haired Sātūrn" — and "fōrest on fōrest" — "like clōūd on clōūd." In all which the sameness of the sound increases the melancholy & monotony of the situation of the de-throned Father of the Gods. The rest is beautiful by its skilful variation of the vowel-sounds, as these are touching by their sameness & monotony

You mention Keats's taste for painting & music (vol 2 p. 68). Of the first I remember no more than his general love of the art, & his admiration of Haydon. But I well remember his telling me that, had he studied music, he had some notions of the combinations of sounds, by which he thought he could have done something as original as his poetry.

[Bailey's letter to Lord Houghton]

Keats returned to Hampstead, it is probable, on Sunday, October 5. He was eager to see his friends, for he had been a month away from them. He wrote Bailey a letter on October 8, relating all the news from and about his friends.

After a tolerable journey, I went from Coach to Coach to as far as Hampstead where I found my Brothers — the next Morning finding myself tolerably well I went to Lambs Conduit Street and delivered your Parcel — Jane and Marianne were greatly improved Marianne especially she has no unhealthy plumpness in the face — but she comes me healthy and angular to the Chin — I did not see John — I was extrem[e]ly sorry to hear that poor Rice, after having had capital Health during his tour, was very ill. I dare say you have heard from him. From no 19 I went to Hunt's and Haydon's who live now neighbours. Shelley was there. I know nothing about anything in this part of the world — every Body seems at Loggerheads. There's Hunt infatuated — there's Haydon's Picture in statu quo. There's Hunt walks up and down his painting room criticising every head most unmercifully There's Horace Smith tired of Hunt. "The web of our Life is of mingled Yarn." Haydon having removed entirely from Marlborough Street Crip[p]s must direct his Letter to Lisson Grove North Paddington. Yesterday Morning while I was at Brown's in came Reynolds — he was pretty bobbish we had a pleasant day — but he would walk home at night that cursed cold distance. M<sup>rs</sup> Bentley's children are making a horrid row — whereby I regret I cannot be transported to your Room to write to you. I am quite disgusted with literary Men — and will never know another except Wordsworth — no not even Byron.

In the rest of the letter, which I have already quoted in part in another connection, Keats cited the jealousy of Haydon and Hunt of each other as an example of the friendship of literary men; related the warnings which Haydon and Reynolds gave him against showing *Endymion* to Hunt; and, to prove his independence of Hunt, quoted a statement of his poetic principles from a letter which he had written his brother George in the "spring."

In October and November, the period in which Keats composed the fourth book of *Endymion*, Bailey and Reynolds were the friends

to whom he revealed most freely his reflections about life and poetry. He retained his admiration of Haydon's genius, but he lost confidence in his disinterestedness of mind. When Haydon visited Oxford in the late summer of 1817, he met a young painter by the name of Cripps who was copying the altarpiece in the chapel in Magdalen Hall. In September, when Keats was stopping with Bailey in Oxford, Haydon asked him to ascertain Cripps's ambition and ability. "In these cases," he said, "should any friend be disposed to assist him up to London and to support him for a year, I will train him in the art with no further remuneration than the pleasure of seeing him advance." Keats replied that he thought that Cripps would "be a tolerable neat brush." In analyzing Cripps's paintings, he showed that he had profited by Haydon's discussions of the principles of painting.

He brought a copy of *Mary Queen of Scots*: it appears to me that he has copied the bad style of the painting, as well as coloured the eyeballs yellow like the original. He has also the fault that you pointed out to me in Hazlitt on the constringing and diffusing of substance. However I really believe that he will take fire at the sight of your Picture — and set about things.

Keats and Bailey became intensely interested in promoting Cripps's career and endeavored, but with little success, to raise a subscription to enable him to accept Haydon's offer. As they grew enthusiastic in behalf of Cripps, however, Haydon grew cold and indifferent. Keats wrote Bailey on November 5; "I hope you will receive an answer from Haydon soon — if not, Pride! Pride! Pride! I have received no more subscription — but shall soon have a full health Liberty and leisure to give a good part of my time to him —." For two or three months he exerted himself in behalf of Cripps, and Haydon at length began to instruct the young painter and reported that he was making progress.

The first of the scurrilous and malignant articles on the Cockney School of Poetry was published in the October number of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. The writer, who signed himself "Z," attacked Hunt alone, but he quoted a motto from Cornelius Webbe in which Keats was praised in ridiculous terms. In a letter to Bailey postmarked November 5, Keats referred to the article with indignation. He was striving to compose *Endymion* in complete independence of Hunt and the linking of his name with Hunt's was particularly galling. It was characteristic of his generous temperament, however, that the scurrilous assault upon Hunt incited him to cleave unto Hunt rather than to desert him.

Keats began the fourth book of *Endymion* sometime after October 8 and completed it on November 28. Social life, combined with illness, delayed the composition. Shortly after his return from Oxford he was confined at Hampstead for a fortnight, not well enough, he wrote Bailey, to stand the chance of a wet night. This was the first manifestation, I believe, of the insidious approach of consumption. On October 8 he advised Bailey, who was suffering from a stomach disorder, not to sacrifice his health to his books. He referred then to his own illness.

The little Mercury I have taken has corrected the Poison and improved my Health — though I feel from my employment that I shall never be again secure in Robustness —

Mercury was employed as a remedy for several diseases, one of which was consumption. Keats did not believe that he had consumption, but he knew that his mother had died from it and that his brother Tom was suffering from it, and he took the precaution of taking a course of mercury. He thought that his cold, like Bailey's stomach disorder, was a consequence of his close application to reading and composition. On November 22 he wrote Bailey:

I think Jane or Marianne has a better opinion of me than I deserve — for really and truly I do not think my Brother's illness connected with mine — you know more of the real Cause than they do nor have I any chance of being rack'd as you have been —

Writing Bailey in the last week in October, Keats related his progress in the composition of the fourth book.

I don't suppose I've written as many Lines as you have read Volumes, or at least Chapters, since I saw you. However, I am in a fair way now to come to a conclusion in at least three Weeks, when I assure you I shall be glad to dismount for a Month or two; although I'll keep as tight a reign [*sic*] as possible till then, nor suffer myself to sleep. I will copy for you the opening of the 4 Book, in which you will see from the Manner I had not an opportunity of mentioning any Poets, for fear of spoiling the effect of the passage by particularising them!

He composed this passage in the lofty and artificial style of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which he had begun to study seriously with Bailey in Oxford. In the second part of the letter, which he wrote a day or two later, he said:

You must forgive although I have only written 300 Lines — they would have been five but I have been obliged to go to town. yesterday I called at Lambs — St. [Lamb's Conduit Street] Jane look'd very flush when I first went in but was much better before I left.

In a letter to Jane Reynolds postmarked October 31 Keats referred to the letter which he had written to Bailey, and he copied the first half of the Song to Sorrow in the fourth book (verses 141-181).

My dear Jane,

When I got home the other night there was a letter from Bailey — and so very kind a one after all my indolence that I felt a very repentance — and finished my Letter to him immediately. I hope you are getting well quite fast. I send you a few lines from my fourth Book with the desire of helping away for you five Minutes of the day —

There is evidence also that Keats was working at this time upon the Triumph of Bacchus, which is enclosed by the two parts of the Song to Sorrow. In a note dated Wednesday morning, November 1817, he requested Dilke to send him Coleridge's *Sibylline Leaves* by the bearer of the note. In the two first stanzas of the Triumph of Bacchus there are reminiscences of Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*. The Wednesday morning on which Keats, while composing or revising the Triumph of Bacchus, sent for Coleridge's *Sibylline Leaves* was, I believe, November 5. In the first place, he left Hampstead about the middle of November; and, in the second place, the Triumph of Bacchus is a part of the second half of the three hundred verses which, in a letter of about the end of October, he wrote Bailey he had composed.

Keats interrupted his composition of the fourth book to write three or four songs for the entertainment of Jane and Marianne Reynolds. Woodhouse transcribed the song *Think not of it, sweet one, so* in his Scrap-book, his Commonplace Book, and his Book of Transcripts, dating each of the three transcripts "abt. 11 Nov. 1817." In his Commonplace Book and his Book of Transcripts, he said that he transcribed the song "from J.K.'s M.S." A manuscript of this song (possibly the original autograph) is in a Book of Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library. I quote this manuscript, which is undated, for it shows Keats in the midst of the process of composition.

~~Think not of it gentle sweet~~  
~~Is it worth a tear?~~  
~~Will thine heart less warmly beat~~  
~~Thy voice less clear?~~

/Think not of it, sweet one, so  
 Give it not a tear  
 Sigh thou mayest and bid it go  
 Any, any where

/Do not look so sad sweet one  
     Sad and fadingly.  
                     then — It is gone  
 Shed one drop ~~an only one~~  
     Oh  
     For twas born to die  
~~sweetly did it die~~  
~~will thou mourn and will thou sob~~  
~~art indeed so sad & un wan~~  
 /Still so pale — then dearest weep  
     weep — I'll count the tears  
~~And for each one for thee I'll keep~~  
 and     one shall be  
~~For each will I invent a bliss~~  
     For thee in after years  
 /Brighter that it left thine eyes  
     Than a sunny rill  
     and thy whispering melodies  
     are tenderer still  
 /Yet as all things mourn awhile  
     fleeting  
     at ~~dying~~ blisses  
     E'en let us too — but be our dirge  
     a dirge of kisses.

*Unfelt, unheard, unseen* is another lyric which Keats composed, it is probable, in November 1817. Woodhouse transcribed it into his Scrap-book and signed and dated it "Keats.1817." Lord Houghton published it in 1848 and dated it likewise "1817." Woodhouse's version differs from Lord Houghton's only in the matter of capital letters.

Woodhouse transcribed in his Book of Transcripts two lyrics — *Apollo to the Graces* and *You say you love* — which Keats composed probably in November or possibly in December 1817. Woodhouse said that *Apollo to the Graces* was "written to the Tune of the air in Don Giovanni" and that he transcribed it "From the orig<sup>l</sup>. in Miss Reynolds' possession"; and he said in shorthand that he obtained *You say you love* "from Miss Reynolds and Mrs. Jones."

These four lyrics were the first short poems which Keats composed since he had begun the composition of *Endymion*, about April 19, 1817. They were also the first songs which he had written since the late summer of 1815. He composed his early songs, we remember, in the eighteenth-century anapestic rhythm of the songs of Moore and Byron. He composed these four songs in the rhythm of Elizabethan lyrics. In 1817, after he had taken Elizabethan poets, especially Shakespeare, as his poetic masters, he read widely in Elizabethan



poetry of all types. The rhythm and the theme of *You say you love* were suggested, Sir Sidney Colvin<sup>8</sup> pointed out, by those of an anonymous Elizabethan song, *A Proper Wooing Song*, which was published in Clement Robinson's *Handful of Pleasant Delites*, 1584. We may compare the first stanzas of the two songs.

You say you love; but with a voice  
 Chaster than a nun's, who singeth  
 The soft vespers to herself  
 When the chime-bell ringeth —  
 O love me truly!

and

Maide will ye loue me yea or no?  
 tell me the trothe and let me go.  
 It can be no lesse than a sinful deed,  
 trust me truly,  
 To linger a Louer that lookes to speede,  
 in due time duly.

By November 22, 1817, a little over six weeks after his return from Oxford, Keats had composed 500 verses of the fourth book of *Endymion*. His progress had been delayed by social engagements, especially with the Reynoldses, by his illness, and by his anxiety about the illness of his brother Tom, who was suffering from consumption, from which he died a year later. About November 20 or 21 he went to Burford Bridge, near Dorking, to complete *Endymion*, and his brothers prepared to go to Devonshire for the sake of Tom's health. In a letter to Bailey, postmarked November 22 but written on November 21, it is probable, he said:

My Brother Tom is much improved — he is going to Devonshire — whither I shall follow him — at present I am just arrived at Dorking to change the Scene — change the Air and give me a spur to wind up my Poem, of which there are wanting 500 Lines. I should have been here a day sooner but the Reynoldses persuaded me to stop in Town to meet your friend Christie.

He wrote Reynolds on November 22:

There are two things which tease me here — one of them Crip[p]s, and the other that I cannot go with Tom into Devonshire — however I hope to do my duty to myself in a week or so; and then I'll try what I can do for my neighbour — now is not this virtuous? on returning to Town I'll damn all Idleness — indeed, in superabundance of employment, I must not be content to run here and there on little two-penny errands. . . .

The beautiful vale of Mickleham, in which Burford Bridge lay, between Dorking and Leatherhead, inspired Keats's imagination. In the letter to Reynolds he said:

<sup>8</sup> Sir Sidney Colvin, pp. 157-158.

I like this place very much. There is Hill and Dale and a little River. I went up Box hill this Evening after the Moon — you a' seen the Moon — came down, and wrote some lines.

We can identify these lines rather closely. According to Keats's plan, each book of *Endymion* would comprise approximately 1000 lines. When he arrived in Dorking, he wrote Bailey on November 21, he lacked 500 lines to complete his poem. These lines, the first which he composed in Burford Bridge, are, therefore, the opening lines of the second 500 lines of the fourth book. In a long passage which begins with verse 485, there is a description of the flight of Endymion and the Indian Maid through the evening sky on a pair of black steeds. In the part of this passage which begins with verse 498, there is a description of the Moon, which represents, in the allegory of the poem, ideal beauty.

Full facing their swift flight, from ebon streak,  
The moon put forth a little diamond peak,  
No bigger than an unobserved star,  
Or tiny point of fairy scymetar,  
Bright signal that she only stoop'd to tie  
Her silver sandals, ere deliciously  
She bow'd into the heavens her timid head.  
Slowly she rose, as though she would have fled. . . .

The lines which Keats composed in Burford Bridge on the evening of November 22 begin, I believe, with line 498. When Keats sat down to resume his description of Endymion's flight through the evening sky, he needed a sight of the moon to inspire him and he went up Box Hill after the moon. He wrote this letter to Reynolds late in the evening, it would seem, after he had composed these lines.

After telling Reynolds that he had composed these verses, he continued:

Whenever I am separated from you, and not engaged in a continued Poem, every Letter shall bring you a lyric — but I am too anxious for you to enjoy the whole, to send you a particle.

The Elizabethan lyrics which he had been reading and the four songs which he had composed two weeks before gave Keats a desire to compose lyrics. A part of the lines which he had composed on this evening of November 22 was a lyric, the prothalamion of Endymion and Diana.

One of the three Books I have with me [he continued] is Shakspear's Poems: I neer found so many beauties in the Sonnets — they seem to be full of fine things

said unintentionally — in the intensity of working out conceits. Is this to be borne? Hark ye!

When lofty trees I see barren of leaves  
Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,  
And Summer's green all girded up in sheaves,  
Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard.

He has left nothing to say about nothing or anything: for look at Snails — you know what he says about Snails, you know where he talks about “cockled Snails” — well, in one of these sonnets, he says — the chap slips into — no! I lie! this is in the Venus and Adonis: the Simile brought it to my Mind.

Audi — As the snail, whose tender horns being hit,  
Shrinks back into his shelly cave with pain,  
And there all smothered up in shade doth sit,  
Long after fearing to put forth again:  
So at his bloody view her eyes are fled,  
Into the deep dark Cabins of her head.

He overwhelms a genuine Lover of Poesy with all manner of abuse, talking about —

“a poet's rage  
And stretched metre of an antique song.”

Which by the by will be a capital Motto for my Poem, won't it? He speaks too of “Time's antique pen” — and “april's first born flowers” — and “death's eternal cold.”

Shakespeare's sonnets, which Keats was absorbing at this time, inspired him two months later to compose sonnets in the Shakespearean form. After he had discussed the beauties of Shakespeare's sonnets, he decided suddenly to send Reynolds some of the lines which he had composed that evening.

By the Whim King! [he exclaimed] I'll give you a Stanza, because it is not material in connection, and when I wrote it I wanted you to — give your vote, pro or con. —

Crystalline Brother of the belt of Heaven,  
Aquarius! to whom King Jove hath given  
Two liquid pulse-streams, 'stead of feather'd wings —  
Two fan-like fountains — thine illuminings  
For Dian play:  
Dissolve the frozen purity of air;  
Let they white shoulders silvery and bare,  
Show cold through watery pinions: make more bright  
The Star-Queen's Crescent on her marriage night:  
Haste Haste away!

Now I hope I shall not fall off in the winding up. . . .

The lyric from which Keats quoted this stanza is a prothalamion which a “pinion'd multitude” sing in anticipation of the wedding

of Endymion and Diana. Since the lyric ends with verse 615, he composed 117 verses on that evening of November 22.

Keats did not "fall off in the winding up" of his poem, for he finished and dated his manuscript November 28. In seven or eight days he composed the five hundred verses which he required to complete his poem. As he had hoped, when he began the poem in the spring, autumn "with universal tinge of sober gold" was all about him when he made an end.

Sir Sidney Colvin<sup>9</sup> suggested that the setting of the closing incidents of the fourth book represents the country around Burford Bridge in late November. Keats described Endymion's farewell to the Indian Maid as follows:

At this he press'd  
His hands against his face, and then did rest  
His head upon a mossy hillock green,  
And so remain'd as he a corpse had been  
All the long day, save when he scanty lifted  
His eyes abroad, to see how shadows shifted  
With the slow move of time, — sluggish and weary  
Until the poplar tops, in journey dreary,  
Had reach'd the river's brim Then up he rose,  
And, slowly as that very river flows,  
Walk'd towards the temple grove with this lament:  
"Why such a golden eve? The breeze is sent  
Careful and soft, that not a leaf may fall  
Before the serene father of them all  
Bows down his summer head below the west.  
Now am I of breath, speech, and speed possess,  
But at the setting I must bid adieu  
To her for the last time. Night will strew  
On the damp grass myriads of lingering leaves,  
And with them shall I die; nor much it grieves  
To die, when summer dies on the cold sward.

The descriptive details of this passage are so realistic that Sir Sidney Colvin<sup>10</sup> mused whether the grove of poplars, which, like a sun-dial, measured the passing hours, could be found somewhere in the vicinity of Burford Bridge.

Keats returned to Hampstead, it is probable, immediately after he had finished the composition of *Endymion*; for his brothers were on the eve of going into Devonshire for Tom's health. He was in Hampstead by the middle of December at least, for he saw Kean play the role of Richard III at Drury Lane on the evening of December 15. He was most intimate with Dilke and Brown in December

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

1817 and January 1818. He saw very little of Reynolds, who was visiting in Exeter during most of this period. He lost some of his liking for Jane and Marianne Reynolds who, he suspected, had an unfavorable opinion of his brother George. He served in Reynolds' place as dramatic critic of *The Champion* and wrote four reviews — *On Edmund Kean as a Shakespearian Actor*, which was published in *The Champion* on December 21; *On Kean in "Richard Duke of York,"* which was published on December 28; and *On "Retribution, or the Chieftain's Daughter,"* and *On "Don Giovanni," a Pantomime,* both of which were published on January 4, 1818.

The first poem which Keats composed after he had completed *Endymion* was the song *In drear-nighted December*. In 1876 Harry Buxton Forman<sup>11</sup> examined an autograph manuscript which had been purchased by Charles Law. This manuscript, to judge by Forman's brief description, substantiates the version which Woodhouse preserved rather than the versions which were published in 1829 in *The Literary Gazette* for September 19, in *The Gem, a Literary Annual*, edited by Thomas Hood, the husband of Jane Reynolds, and in Galignani's edition of *Poems of Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats*. In this manuscript, for example, the first verse of the first and second stanzas is written "In drear-nighted December" and the fifth verse of the third stanza "The feel of not to feel it."

Woodhouse transcribed into his Commonplace Book a slightly inaccurate version which he corrected afterwards from a more authentic text. In his Book of Transcripts he transcribed a version which he said he obtained "from J.H.Reynolds." He dated it "Dec. 1817" and wrote in shorthand that he obtained "the date from Reynolds' album." In his Scrap-book he transcribed the same version together with a letter which he wrote Taylor on November 23 1820, when he returned Reynolds' album or volume of poems in manuscript. I quote the version in the Scrap-book.

Song. —

In a drear-nighted December,  
 Too happy, hap[p]ly, tree;  
 Thy branches ne'er remember  
 Their green felicity:  
 The North cannot undo them,  
 With a sleety whistle through them,  
 Nor frozen thawings glue them  
 From budding, at the Prime.

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<sup>11</sup> H. B. Forman, *Variorum Edition*, Vol. II, p. 241.

In a drear-nighted December,  
 Too happy happy brook;  
 Thy bubblings ne'er remember  
 Apollo's summer look:  
 But with a sweet forgetting,  
 They stay their crystal fretting —  
 Never, never petting  
 About the frozen time.

Ah would 'twere so with many  
 A gentle girl & boy!  
 But were there ever any  
 With'd not at passed joy? —  
 The feel of not to feel it,  
 When there is none to heal it,  
 Nor numbed sense to steel it  
 Was never said in Rhyme. —

In the letter to Taylor in which he transcribed this poem, Woodhouse said:

I have tried unsuccessfully to admire the 3<sup>d</sup> stanza of "Drear nighted Dec" as much as the 2 first. — I plead guilty, even before I am accused of an utter abhorrence of the word "feel" for feeling (substantively). But Keats seems fond of it and will ingraft it "in aeternum" on our language — Be it so — I will conquer my dislike — But the great objection to the 3<sup>d</sup> stanza is that the 4 last lines are an excrescence — and ought to have had some connection with the 4 first which are an application of or rather antithesis to the last stanza —

I would not dream of entering into the lists with any poet that ever rhymed much less Keats. But as a specimen of the sort of Sentiment which sho<sup>d</sup> terminate the song in my opinion "see here"

## 3

But in the Soul's December  
 The Fancy backward strays,  
 And sadly doth remember  
 The hue of golden days:  
 In woe, the thought ap[p]alling  
 Of bliss — gone past recalling,  
 Brings o'er the heart a falling  
 Not to be told in Rhyme, by yrs truly  
 R<sup>d</sup>. Woodhouse

Woodhouse's stanza is more abstract in sentiment and more trite in phraseology than Keats's. It has a Wordsworthian savor, the "falling" being a reminiscence of the *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*. Sir Sidney Colvin<sup>12</sup> discovered a transcript of the song made in 1827 by Woodhouse's brother and entitled "Pain of Memory." The third stanza of this transcript is the stanza which Wood-

<sup>12</sup> Sir Sidney Colvin, p. 160.

house composed; and Colvin decided that Keats had composed it as an alternative version. If Woodhouse's letter to Taylor had not been discovered, his stanza would be accepted as Keats's composition.

The rhythm of this song was suggested to Keats, Colvin pointed out, by that of a song in Dryden's *Spanish Fryar*. I quote the first stanza of Dryden's song:

Farewell ungrateful Traitor,  
Farewell my perjured swain,  
Let never injured creature  
Believe a man again.  
The pleasure of possessing  
Surpasses all expressing,  
But 'tis too short a blessing,  
And Love too long a pain.

The study of Dryden which Keats began in this period had an influence upon the poems which he composed in 1818 and in 1819, especially upon the short romances, *The Pot of Basil* and *Lamia*.

(The letters which Keats wrote in the fall and winter of 1817 reveal the philosophy of life and of poetry which he had thought out during the seven months in which he had worked on the composition of *Endymion*. He founded the allegory of the romance, which I shall interpret in a later section, upon the neo-Platonic philosophy of beauty which he learned from the Renaissance poets, Spenser, Shakespeare, Drayton, and Milton, and, to a less extent, from his contemporaries, Wordsworth and Shelley.

Keats developed his poetic system, as we have seen, out of an intense and comprehensive study of Shakespeare's plays. In his interpretation of Shakespeare he was influenced successively by different friends. In the spring of 1817 he read Shakespeare with Haydon as his interpreter, discarded Hunt's familiar and sentimental style of poetry, and gained a conception of the elevated or grand style of Renaissance poetry. He rejected also Hunt's philosophy of optimism and acquired certain humanistic principles, especially the humanistic virtue of magnanimity. In September he was induced by Bailey to study contemporary philosophy, particularly the humanitarian principles in Wordsworth's *Excursion*. At the same time he began to study Hazlitt's essays upon empirical philosophy and upon Shakespeare's plays.

Keats met Hazlitt in Hunt's cottage on Hampstead Heath in the fall of 1816. He acquired gradually an intense admiration for Hazlitt, but he never became intimate with him. By March 1817 he

had begun to accept Hazlitt as an authority in literary matters. He wrote Reynolds on March 9: "It is the finest thing by God — as Hazlitt would say." On May 11 he wrote Haydon: "I am very near agreeing with Hazlitt that Shakespeare is enough for us." While he was in Oxford with Bailey he read Hazlitt's *Round Table*, a collection of essays from *The Examiner*, which had been published in the first part of 1817.

How is Hazlitt? [he wrote Reynolds on September 21]. We were reading his *Table* last night. I know he thinks himself not estimated by ten People in the world — I wish he knew he is.

Keats possessed a copy of the *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, which Hazlitt published in the latter part of 1817, and he read, marked, and annotated his copy with penetrating insight. On January 10, 1818 he wrote Haydon that he was convinced that there are three things to rejoice at in this age — Haydon's pictures, Wordsworth's *Excursion*, and Hazlitt's depth of taste. In January and February 1818 he attended the lectures upon the English poets which Hazlitt delivered at the Surrey Institution. He possessed also, as we have seen, a copy of Hazlitt's *Essay on the Principles of Human Action*, and he accepted Hazlitt's philosophic thesis. On April 27, one or two days after the publication of *Endymion*, he wrote Reynolds:

I have written to George for some Books — shall learn Greek, and very likely Italian — and in other ways prepare myself to ask Hazlitt in about a years time the best metaphysical road I can take.

By the time he published *Endymion*, he took Hazlitt as his preceptor in poetry and in philosophy and, in particular, as his interpreter of Shakespeare's poetic art.

The conception of poetry which Keats embodied in *Endymion* is ✓ romantic. He told the Greek myth of Endymion and Phoebe in the romantic style in which Spenser, Shakespeare, and Drayton related Greek myths. In his essay *On Kean in "Richard Duke of York,"* which he published in *The Champion* on December 28, 1817, he defined the qualities of Shakespeare's poetry, preferring the romantic to the realistic and the humanistic. *Richard Duke of York*, in which Kean played the leading role on December 22, was a compilation of the three parts of *Henry VI*.

The three parts of *Henry VI* . . . are written with infinite vigour, but their regularity tied the hand of Shakespeare. Particular facts kept him in the high road, and would not suffer him to turn down leafy and winding lanes, or to break wildly and at once into the breathing fields. The poetry is for the most part



ironed and manacled with a chain of facts, and cannot get free; it cannot escape from the prison house of history, nor often move without our being disturbed with the clanking of its fetters. The poetry of Shakespeare is generally free as is the wind — a perfect thing of the elements, winged and sweetly coloured. Poetry must be free! It is of the air, not of the earth; and the higher it soars the nearer it gets to its home. The poetry of "Romeo and Juliet," of "Hamlet," of "Macbeth," is the poetry of Shakespeare's soul — full of love and divine romance. It knows no stop in its delight, but "goeth where it listeth" — remaining, however, in all men's hearts a perpetual and golden dream. The poetry of "Lear," "Othello," "Cymbeline," etc., is the poetry of human passions and affections, made almost ethereal by the power of the poet. Again, the poetry of "Richard," "John," and the Henries is the blending the imaginative with the historical: it is poetry! — but often times poetry wandering on the London Road.

Of the three types of Shakespeare's poetry which Keats defined — the poetry of historical fact, the poetry of human affections and passions, and the poetry of romance — he preferred the poetry of romance. His conception of poetry was very similar to that which Hazlitt expressed in an essay *On Poetical Versatility in The Round Table*.

Poetry dwells in a perpetual Utopia of its own. . . . It cannot be "constrained by mastery." It has the range of the universe; it traverses the empyreum, and looks down on nature from a higher sphere. When it lights upon the earth, it loses some of its dignity and its use. Its strength is in its wings; its element the air . . . Poets live in an ideal world, where they make every thing out according to their wishes and fancies. They either find things delightful, or make them so. They feign the beautiful and grand out of their own minds, and imagine all things to be, not what they are, but what they ought to be. They are naturally inventors, creators of truth, of love and beauty. . . .

(By the fall of 1817, when Keats composed the fourth book of *Endymion*, he had begun to interpret Wordsworth's naturalism and Shakespeare's dramatic art in the light of the empirical principles which he was learning from Hazlitt's essays. The empirical humanism which he developed out of Shakespeare's plays with Hazlitt's assistance caused him, we shall find, to turn from the poetry of romance to the poetry of human affections and passions.)

Let us consider first, however, his empirical interpretation of Wordsworth's naturalism. English empirical philosophy was developed by Hobbes, Locke, Hume, and their successors. Wordsworth derived his empirical principles, as Arthur Beatty<sup>13</sup> has demonstrated, from David Hartley's *Observations on Man, his Frame, his Duty, and his Expectations*. The fundamental principle of empir-

<sup>13</sup> Arthur Beatty, *William Wordsworth, His Doctrine and Art in their Historical Relations*, Second Edition, Madison (Wisconsin), 1927.

icism is the principle that there are no innate ideas, that ideas are copies of the impressions made by external objects on the senses. The second principle is the principle that complex ideas, or intellectual ideas, develop out of simple ideas, or sensations, by the process of association. A third principle is the principle that the feelings of pleasure and pain are the springs of action. And a fourth principle is the principle that the mind acts from a mechanical or physical necessity, over which it has no control. There was a diversity of opinion among the empirical philosophers in regard to the secondary principles of empiricism. Materialists held that impulses of the mind, which govern action, are egotistic or selfish; and humanitarians held that impulses of the mind, when pure and uncontaminated, are disinterested or benevolent.

Wordsworth, accepting the fundamental principles of empiricism, stressed sensations, the simple ideas out of which complex ideas, such as moral and religious ideas, evolve through the process of association. The character of a man's sensations, he believed, determines the character of his higher ideas. Sensations from pure and beautiful natural objects produce pure and beautiful ideas. Wordsworth expressed this philosophy of nature in *Tintern Abbey*, the *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*, and other poems which Keats admired and assimilated. In *Tintern Abbey* he said that nature informs the mind that is within us, impresses it with quietness and beauty, and feeds it with noble thoughts. Therefore, he said, he was a lover of the "mighty world Of eye, and ear,"

well pleased to recognise  
In nature and the language of the sense,  
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
Of all my moral being.

Upon the empirical bases of sensationism and associationism, Wordsworth imposed a principle of mystical insight which was neo-Platonic in origin. To beautiful sensations of nature, he said in *Tintern Abbey*, he owed

another gift,  
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,  
In which the burthen of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world,  
Is lightened: — that serene and blessed mood,  
In which the affections gently lead us on, —  
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood

Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
 In body, and become a living soul:  
 While with an eye made quiet by the power  
 Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
 We see into the life of things.

In *Endymion*, as I shall show in a later section, Keats fused Wordsworth's natural ecstasy, or ecstasy based on natural sensations, with the neo-Platonic ecstasy which he derived from Spenser. From the fall of 1817 to the end of his life, Keats stressed the importance of sensations. In the letter which he wrote Bailey on November 22, 1817, he exclaimed: "O for a Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts!" employing "sensation" in Wordsworth's meaning of the word.

Hazlitt's essays, which are based on empirical principles, helped Keats to develop out of his study of Shakespeare's plays a conception of the dramatic, or objective, character of poetic genius. In the letter which he wrote Bailey on November 22, 1817, Keats said:

Men of Genius are great as certain ethereal Chemicals operating on the Mass of neutral intellect — by [but] they have not any individuality, any determined Character — I would call the top and head of those who have a proper self Men of Power.

Keats's distinction between men of power and men of genius may be expanded as follows. Men of power, in whom the will or the ego controls the intellect, have strong, dominant personalities. Their intellects are subjective, shaping and coloring their conceptions of the world in accordance with their practical desires. Men of genius, in whom the intellect has free play, have no individuality, no identity. Their intellects are objective, reflecting the world as in a mirror. This distinction sprang out of the conflict in Keats's age between the empirical philosophy of Hobbes, Locke, and Hartley and the transcendental philosophy of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. Keats explained this distinction more fully, we shall see later, in the letter which he wrote Woodhouse on October 27, 1818, eleven months later.

Hazlitt published his *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* in the latter part of 1817, and Keats bought, read, and annotated his copy, I have no doubt, by the end of 1817. His marked and annotated copy is now in the Lowell Collection in the Harvard College Library. In one of his annotations he made a distinction between the man of objective genius, who, imagining into the minds of other men, expresses their passions, and the man of subjective genius, who

expresses his own passions. Hazlitt observed near the end of his essay on *King Lear*:

That the greatest strength of genius is shown in describing the strongest passions. for the power of the imagination, in works of invention, must be in proportion to the force of the natural impressions, which are the subject of them.

Keats marked this passage and wrote in the margin:

If we compare the Passions to different tuns and hogsheads of wine in a vast cellar — thus it is — the poet by one cup should know the scope of any particular wine without getting intoxicated — this is the highest exertion of Power, and the next step is to paint from memory of gone self storms.

In the letter which he wrote his brothers on December 28, 1817, Keats made this distinction between men of objective genius and men of subjective genius from the angle of the general representation of life.

I had not a dispute, but a disquisition, with Dilke upon various subjects; several things dove-tailed in my mind, and at once it struck me what quality went to form a man of achievement, especially in literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously — I mean *Negative Capability*, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason. Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetrarium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half-knowledge. This pursued through volumes would perhaps take us no further than this, that with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration.

Keats drew a lively picture of his imagination in the process of forming an intuition of truth out of the matter which rushed through his mind in the stream of thought. His imagination was stimulated, it is probable, by his perception, in the midst of the disquisition, of the subjective, rationalizing character of Dilke's mind. Almost two years later he wrote his brother George:

That Dilke was a Man who cannot feel he has a personal identity unless he has made up his Mind about every thing. The only means of strengthening one's intellect is to make up one's mind about nothing — to let the mind be a thoroughfare for all thoughts. . . . Dilke will never come at a truth as long as he lives; because he is always trying at it. He is a Godwin-methodist.

(In his definition of the "negative capability" of Shakespeare, Keats touched upon the chief principles of the philosophy of poetry which he had thought out by the end of 1817. In the first place, he drew a distinction between a man of objective or negatively capable genius, such as Shakespeare, who is "capable of being in uncer-

tainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason," and a man of subjective or egotistic genius, such as Coleridge, who will "let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half-knowledge.") He was reading Coleridge's *Sibylline Leaves* in November, a month before. His conception of Coleridge may have been influenced by Hazlitt's review of the *Biographia Literaria* in *The Edinburgh Review* for August 1817, four months before.

Reason and imagination [Hazlitt said] are both excellent things; but perhaps their provinces ought to be kept more distinct than they have been lately. . . . Mr. C., with great talents, has, by an ambition to be everything, become nothing. His metaphysics have been a dead weight on the wings of his imagination — while his imagination has run away with his reason and common sense.

In the second place, Keats drew an explicit distinction between the imagination, the faculty by which the negatively capable genius intuits truth, and the reason, the faculty by which the egotistic genius deduces truth. The reason, by nature, seeks to construct an absolute and comprehensive system of philosophy into which it can fit and by which it can explain all of the facts of experience. The imagination, on the contrary, apprehends truth in individual, isolated intuitions. In a letter to Bailey, November 22, 1817, Keats explained his belief in the authenticity of the imagination.

(I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination — What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth — whether it existed before or not — for I have the same Idea of all our Passions as of Love they are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty.) In a Word, you may know my favorite Speculation by my first Book and the little song I sent in my last — which is a representation from the fancy of the probable mode of operating in these Matters.

The passage in the first book of *Endymion* to which Keats referred comprises verses 777-807. He introduced this theory of the imagination into the neo-Platonic philosophy of beauty, conceiving of the imagination as the faculty which, in a state of ecstasy, apprehends essential or ideal beauty. The Song to Sorrow — the song which he sent to Bailey in his last letter — demonstrates the way in which passions are creative of essential beauty. Sorrow, I presume he meant, stimulated his imagination into expressing this sorrow in the form of ideal beauty.

In the third place, Keats said that a great poet, such as Shakespeare, is content with the isolated truths which his imagination intuits, because the sense of beauty overcomes every other considera-

tion, or rather obliterates all consideration. This introduces us to a very important poetic principle which Keats stated in the letter to his brothers, December 28, 1817. Discussing West's *Death on the Pale Horse*, he said:

It is a wonderful picture, when West's age is considered; but there is nothing to be intense upon, no women one feels mad to kiss, no face swelling into reality. The excellence of every art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate from their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth. Examine "King Lear," and you will find this exemplified throughout. but in this picture we have unpleasantness without any momentous depth of speculation excited, in which to bury its repulsiveness.

Just as the principle of luxury, or sentimental sensuousness, was a chief principle in the poetic system which Keats learned from Hunt, so the principle of intensity, or gusto, was a chief principle of the poetic system which he wrought out of his study of Shakespeare's plays. He owed his understanding of this principle partly to Haydon and partly to Hazlitt. In *The Round Table* Hazlitt said that gusto consists in the expression of the highest degree of passion of which the subject is capable; and in the *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* he said that *King Lear* stands first among Shakespeare's plays for "the profound intensity of the passion."

Keats commented on the intensity of *King Lear* in an annotation in his copy of the facsimile reprint in 1808 of the First Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays. His copy, which is in the Dilke Collection in Hampstead, is dated 1817. Since Keats studied his copy of Whittingham's reprint of the Johnson and Steevens edition in the spring of 1817, he probably bought and read his copy of the reprint of the First Folio in the latter part of 1817. *Troilus and Cressida*, which is most marked, has five annotations; *King Lear*, which is well marked, has three annotations; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a large part of which is marked, has one annotation; and *Romeo and Juliet* and *Henry IV, Part I*, have a few markings.

Keats described the intensity of passion in *King Lear* in the following annotation:

*General.* — You see how full of changes his age is. . . .

(Act I, Scene 1.)

How finely is the brief of Lear's character sketched in this conference — from this point does Shakespeare spur him out to the mighty grapple — "the seeded pride that hath to this maturity blowne up" Shakespeare doth scatter abroad on the winds of Passion, where the germs take b[u]oyant root in stormy Air, suck lightning sap, and become voiced dragons — self-will and pride and wrath are taken at a rebound by his giant hand and mounted to the Clouds — there to remain and thunder evermore.

Keats found the principle of intensity in imagery as well as in passion. He defined three principles, one of which is intensity in imagery, in the letter which he wrote to Taylor on February 27, 1818. "In *Endymion*," he said, "I have most likely but moved into the Go-cart from the leading strings. In Poetry I have a few Axioms, and you will see how far I am from their Centre."

1<sup>st</sup>. I think Poetry should surprise by a fine excess and not by Singularity — it should strike the Reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a Remembrance — 2<sup>nd</sup>. Its touches of Beauty should never be half way thereby making the reader breathless instead of content: the rise, the progress, the setting of imagery should like the sun come natural to him — shine over him and set soberly although in magnificence leaving him in the Luxury of twilight — but it is easier to think what Poetry should be than to write it — and this leads me on to another axiom. That if Poetry comes not as naturally as the Leaves to a tree it had better not come at all.

These three principles — the principles of excess, intensity, and spontaneity — are three of the chief principles or qualities of Shakespeare's poetry and of Renaissance poetry in general. Keats found these qualities in the following passage of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

These are the forgeries of jealousy,  
And never since the middle Summers spring  
Met we on hil, in dale, forrest, or mead,  
By paved fountaine, or by rushie brooke,  
Or in the beached margent of the sea,  
To dance our ringlets to the whistling Winde,  
But with thy braules thou hast disturb'd our sport.  
(Act II, Scene 1.)

In an annotation upon this passage Keats observed:

There is something exquisitely rich and luxurious in Titania's saying "since the middle summer's spring" as if bowers were not exuberant and covert enough for fairy sports until their second sprouting — which is surely the most bounteous overwhelming of all Nature's goodnesses. She steps forth benignly in the spring and her conduct is so gracious that by degrees all things are becoming happy under her wings and nestle against her bosom: she feels this love and gratitude too much to remain selfsame, and unable to contain herself buds forth the overflowings of her heart about the middle summer. O Shakespeare thy ways are but just searchable! The thing is a piece of profound verdure.

Keats revealed his understanding of the grandeur and the universality of Shakespeare's art in an annotation upon a passage of *Troilus and Cressida*:

Sith every action that hath gone before,  
Whereof we have Record, Triall did draw

Bias and thwart, not answering the ayme ·  
 And that unbodied figure of the thought  
 That gave't surmised shape.

(Act I, Scene 3.)

The genius of Shakespeare was an in[n]ate universality — wherefore he had the utmost atchievement of human intellect prostrate beneath his indolent and kingly gaze. He could do easily Man's utmost. His plans of tasks to come were not of this world — if what he purposed to do hereafter would not in his own Idea "answer the aim" how tremendous must have been his Conception of Ultimates.

These poetic principles which Keats developed out of Shakespeare's plays are embodied very imperfectly in *Endymion*. He thought them out, as we have seen, while he was composing the romance. By the time that he had composed the third book, his theory of poetry had changed so much that he was dissatisfied with the poem. He wrote Haydon on September 28, 1817:

My Ideas with respect to it I assure you are very low — and I would write the subject thoroughly again — but I am tired of it and think the time would be better spent in writing a new Romance which I have in my eye for next summer — Rome was not built in a Day — and all the good I expect from my employment this summer is the fruit of Experience which I hope to gather in my next Poem.

And on February 27, 1818, when he had begun to copy the fourth book for the printer, he wrote Taylor:

If *Endymion* serves me as a Pioneer perhaps I ought to be content. I have great reason to be content, for thank God I can read and perhaps understand Shakespeare to his depths, and I have I am sure many friends, who, if I fail, will attribute any change in my Life and Temper to Humbleness rather than to Pride — to a cowering under the Wings of great Poets rather than to a Bitterness that I am not appreciated. I am anxious to get *Endymion* printed that I may forget it and proceed.

We may censure Keats for this romantic attitude to poetic composition. His friends, like Shakespeare's fellow actors, praised him for never blotting a line; but the critic, repeating Ben Jonson's reply to the actors, may say, "Would that he had blotted a thousand!" A poet has the right to compose a poem as an exercise and experiment by which to improve his technique and develop his principles, but he does not have the right to publish this exercise. The few alterations which Keats made in *Endymion* when he copied it for the printer show how much he could have improved it. The censure of the reviewers taught him, we shall see, the folly of publishing a poem in imperfect form. His later poems were carefully revised and polished.



## 2. SOURCES

The myth of Endymion and Phoebe, which grew up in the popular traditions of Elis in the Peloponnesus and of the Ionian cities in Caria, was the subject of a lyric poem of Sappho which has not survived. It does not exist in full development in extant classical literature, but allusions to it are found in Theocritus, Apollonius Rhodius, Apollodorus, Pausanias, Lucian, Ovid, and Cicero. During the Renaissance, when the study of classical literature was revived, it became a favorite subject for poetic allusion in the literatures of Europe. Keats was familiar with the beautiful allusions in Spenser's *Epithalamion*, Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, Ben Jonson's *Masque of Oberon*, Marston's *Insatiate Countess*, Beaumont and Fletcher's *Maid's Tragedy*, Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, Drummond's sonnets, and Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals*. These allusions are vivid but brief. In Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, Cloe begs a shepherd to stay in the green wood while she tells him tales of love —

How the pale *Phoebe* hunting in a Grove,  
First saw the Boy *Endymion*, from whose Eyes  
She took eternal fire that never dyes:  
How she convey'd him softly in a sleep,  
His temples bound with poppy, to the steep  
Head of old *Latmus*, where she stoops each night,  
Gilding the Mountain with her Brothers light,  
To kiss her sweetest.

John Lyly and Michael Drayton were the only English writers before Keats who developed the myth of Endymion and Phoebe. Keats read doubtless Lyly's *Endimion*, an allegorical comedy of the politics of the court of Queen Elizabeth, but, as Sir Sidney Colvin observed, he found nothing in it to his purpose. Drayton composed two narrative poems upon the myth — *Endimion and Phoebe* and *The Man in the Moone* — from which Keats derived the essential features of the plot of his romance.

Drayton published *Endimion and Phoebe* in the spring of 1595, for it was entered in the Stationers' Register on April 12, 1595 and was referred to in Lodge's *Fig for Momus*, the preface to which is dated May 6, 1595; but, for some obscure reason, he never republished it. He published *The Man in the Moone* in 1606 in his *Poems Lyrick and Pastorall*.

There is no doubt that Keats read *The Man in the Moone*; for he possessed a copy of one of John Smethwicke's editions of Drayton's

poems (either that of 1619 or that of 1636), which, like most editions, contains this poem. There is no external evidence, however, to indicate that Keats read *Endimion and Phoebe*. There were very few copies of the unique edition of the poem in existence, it is probable, by the first quarter of the nineteenth century. J. P. Collier, who reprinted the poem in 1856 and again about 1870, discovered only two copies. In an unpublished dissertation in 1922, I argued, on the basis of internal evidence, that Keats was indebted to *Endimion and Phoebe*; and Miss Lowell, accepting my argument, investigated the existence and the location of copies of the unique edition in Keats's age. She discovered that the copy which Collier had possessed is in the library of W. A. White of Brooklyn, New York. This copy, which lacks the title page and the first leaf, contains a note by Collier that the only perfect copy which he knew was in a "collegiate library." With this note as a clue, she discovered that the perfect copy is in the library of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey and was in that library in Keats's lifetime. In 1925 J. W. Hebel reprinted *Endimion and Phoebe* from these two copies. In *The Times Literary Supplement* for April 2, 1925, the Assistant Librarian of Marsh's Library, Dublin, reported that a third copy is in that library on loan from the library of Cashel Cathedral.

Although there were very few copies of the unique edition of *Endimion and Phoebe* in existence in 1816 and 1817, it is not impossible that Keats discovered and read one of them. His friends and acquaintances — Clarke, Hunt, Haydon, Reynolds, Dilke, Hazlitt, and Lamb — were enthusiastic students of Elizabethan literature; and his publishers, Taylor and Hessey, bought and sold old books as well as new in their Fleet Street shop. His friends knew by the end of 1816 that he was intending to compose a long romance upon the myth of Endymion and Phoebe; and, if they had known of the existence of a copy of Drayton's *Endimion and Phoebe*, they would have told him. He may have discovered the copy in Westminster Abbey Library, or the copy which Collier afterwards possessed, or a copy of which there is now no record.

Drayton composed *Endimion and Phoebe* in the *dolce stil nuovo*, the sweet new style, which the English poets of the sixteenth century introduced from Italy. It belongs to a type of amorous and mythological poem, such as Lodge's *Scillaes Metamorphosis*, Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, and Nash's *Choice of Valentines*, which was a vogue in the last decade of the sixteenth century. Drayton was indebted to Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* for his metre, the heroic couplet, and for his description

of Endymion and Phoebe. He was indebted to Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* for his description of the manner in which Phoebe woos Endymion. In his style and in his Platonic theme, however, he was influenced chiefly by Spenser, to whom he paid a fine tribute at the end of the poem. The allegory of the poem is two-fold. In the first place, Endymion is the Platonic lover and Phoebe is essential or ideal beauty; and, in the second place, Endymion is Drayton and Phoebe is Anne Goodere, the lady whom Drayton loved.

Drayton began *Endymion and Phoebe* with a long, sensuous, and colorful description of Mount Latmos. Endymion, a young shepherd who kept his flock upon the sides of Latmos, had consecrated his life to the service of Phoebe, the chaste goddess of the moon, who, although he did not know it, returned his love, fed his flock, and had him crowned king of the shepherds. At the end of the third year she visited him in the guise of a nymph. She found him fishing by a river's side near his browsing flock, and wooed him as Venus had wooed Adonis; but the perverse boy threatened her with the wrath of Phoebe, to whom he had dedicated his service. After her departure, however, love undermined his defenses and he fain would have recalled her. That night he lay by the side of the river, gazing at the starry firmament and pining for the love of the nymph whom he had scorned. At dawn Phoebe deserted the heavens to visit him. The planets were amazed by her departure and the gods were displeased. She found Endymion asleep, clipped him in her arms, and kissed him. He awoke, recognized the nymph, and confessed his love for her. She now turned coy and made him woo her. At length she confessed to him that she was not a simple nymph but that she was Phoebe, and she promised to deify him as her immortal paramour. She assumed her celestial form, wrapped him in a fiery mantle, bore him up into the air, and imparted to him the secrets of the universe. Drayton brought the poem to an end with a description of the nuptial festival to which Phoebe invited the deities of the air, the sea, and the woods.

In the *Man in the Moone*, Drayton related the myth of Endymion and Phoebe in the setting of the annual feast which shepherds celebrate in honor of the great god Pan, the preserver of their sheep. The poem is semi-satirical, semi-scientific, and wholly tedious. The shepherds, who represent poets, were sad, for they foresaw the coming of evil times in which they would wander unrespected in barren fields. That night after the Feast to Pan, as they were sitting together in the full moonlight, they decided that some one of their company should rehearse some rhyme to pass away the time. They

chose Rowland, who represents Drayton, and he related the story of Endymion and Phoebe. Every month, Rowland said, Phoebe went to Latmos to see Endymion and the gods debated the propriety of her departure. Endymion, instead of being a Platonic lover, was a young astronomer who studied the wandering course of the moon. Phoebe appeared to him without disguise. She laid aside her celestial brightness, however, and wore a mantle which presented scenes in kaleidoscopic succession. Instead of wooing Endymion with amorous arts, she delivered a long lecture upon her nature and attributes and upon her influence upon the universe. Her fair speech so craftily caught him that he was transported with love for her. He forsook the delights which shepherds prefer and followed her through all the regions which she frequented and ruled. Entering her chariot, he mounted with her into the air and acquired a knowledge of astronomy. At the end of the poem, Rowland (or Drayton) said that Endymion, accompanying Phoebe in her monthly course, saw all of the crimes which men commit on earth.

Keats derived the theme of his *Endymion*, the neo-Platonic quest of essential or ideal beauty, from several sources, the chief of which were Spenser's *Fowre Hymnes* and *Faerie Queene*. He found this theme already applied, however, to the myth of Endymion in Drayton's *Endimion and Phoebe*. He was influenced by Drayton, I believe, in his representation of the moon as the symbol of ideal beauty.

Drayton and Keats are notable among English poets for their cult of the moon. As a boy, it is probable, Keats had felt, as Sir Sidney Colvin expressed it, the beauty, the mystery, and the unity of aspect which moonlight infuses into natural objects. Clarke told Woodhouse that one of the first poems which Keats composed was a sonnet to the moon; and Mathew, in the epistle which he wrote to Keats in November 1815, reminded Keats that the moon, who had cherished his childhood with fostering care, was the source of his poetic inspiration. Keats learned from Drayton, I believe, to understand and to interpret his unconscious feelings for the moon; for he was reading Drayton's poems in the fall of 1815, we remember, and he may have read them earlier.

Drayton expressed and interpreted his love for the moon in several of his poems, and especially in *Endimion and Phoebe*. Endymion addressed the nymph who was Phoebe as follows:

Be kind (quoth he) sweet Nymph vnto thy louer,  
My soules sole essence, and my senses mouer,  
Life of my life, pure Image of my hart,  
Impressure of Conceit, Inuention, Art,

My vital spirit, receues his spirit from thee,  
 Thou art that all which ruleth all in me,  
 Thou art the sap, and life whereby I lue,  
 Which powerfull vigor doost receiue and giue,  
 Thou nourishest the flame wherein I burne,  
 The North whereto my harts true tuch doth turne.

In the third book of Keats's romance (vv. 141 *et seq.*) Endymion addressed the moon in similar thought and in similar style:

What is there in thee, Moon! that thou shouldst move  
 My heart so potently? When yet a child  
 I oft have dried my tears when thou hast smil'd.  
 Thou seem'dst my sister: hand in hand we went  
 From eve to morn across the firmament.

. . . . .  
 And as I grew in years, still didst thou blend  
 With all my ardours: thou wast the deep glen;  
 Thou wast the mountain-top — the sage's pen —  
 The poet's harp — the voice of friends — the sun;  
 Thou wast the river — thou wast glory won;  
 Thou wast my clarion's blast — thou wast my steed —  
 My goblet full of wine — my topmost deed: —  
 Thou wast the charm of women, lovely Moon!  
 O what a wild and harmonized tune  
 My spirit struck from all the beautiful!  
 On some bright essence could I lean, and lull  
 Myself to immortality. . . .

Keats, like Drayton, regarded the moon as the symbol of that ideal beauty which permeates all things. In working out the theme of his romance, he sent Endymion in his quest of Phoebe, or ideal beauty, through the various regions of the earth. In the first book Endymion is the prince of the shepherds who keep their flocks upon the slopes of Mount Latmos. In the second book, guided by "airy voices," he descends into a cavern and wanders through subterranean passages, seeing many wonders. In the third book he wanders over the floor of the sea. And in the fourth book he regains the surface of the earth, meets with an Indian maid, and flies with her on winged steeds through the air to Mount Latmos. I agree with Sir Sidney Colvin that Keats derived suggestions for the regions through which Endymion wanders from the following passage in Drayton's *Man in the Moone*:

Endimion now forsakes  
 All the delights that shepherds do prefer,  
 And sets his mind so gen'rally on her,  
 That all neglected to the groves and springs,  
 He follows Phoebe, that him safely brings

(As their great queen) unto the nymphish bowers,  
 Wherein clear rivers beautified with flowers,  
 The silver Naidess bathe them in the brack.  
 Sometime with her the sea-horse he doth back,  
 Amongst the blue Nereides, and when  
 Weary of waters, goddess like agen,  
 She the high mountains actively assays,  
 And there amongst the light Oriades,  
 That ride the swift roes, Phoebe doth resort;  
 Sometime amongst those that with them comport,  
 The Hamadriades, doth the woods frequent;  
 And there she stays not; but incontinent,  
 Calls down the Dragons that her chariot draw,  
 And with Endymion pleased that she saw,  
 Mounteth thereon, in twinkling of an eye,  
 Stripping the winds, beholding from the sky  
 The earth in roundness of a perfect ball. . . .

The underground wanderings of Endymion, which do not occur in Drayton's poem, were suggested to Keats, I believe, by Shelley's *Alastor* and the Cave of Mammon in the second book of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. The poet in *Alastor*, seeking the beautiful woman who had appeared to him in a vision, enters a boat and floats down a river, passing in one stage of his voyage through a cavern.

A cavern there  
 Yawned, and amid its slant and winding depths  
 Ingulfed the rushing sea . . .  
 . . . The boat pursued  
 The windings of the cavern. . . .

Keats used the word "cavern" in Endymion's farewell to his quest of ideal beauty:

Caverns lone, farewell!  
 And air of visions, and the monstrous swell  
 Of visionary seas!

(IV. 651-654).

Descriptive details of the underworld which Endymion traversed — cliffs, chasms, torrents, wild and picturesque scenes, etc. — remind me of the cavern in *Alastor*. Other details — "Millions" of "gems" "sparkled on a vein of gold," "A dusky empire and its diadems" — recall the Cave of Mammon which Sir Guyon explored.

Keats derived the most striking feature of the plot of *Endymion* from Drayton's *Endymion and Phoebe*. In Drayton's poem Phoebe disguises herself as a nymph, woos Endymion, and makes him renounce her service, to which he had dedicated himself, for love of the

nymph whom she is impersonating. In the end she confesses that she is Phoebe, forgives his defection, and makes him her immortal lover. Keats represented Phoebe's amorous deception of Endymion as two-fold. In the first book, Phoebe, concealing her identity visits Endymion in his dreams; and his soul is torn between worship of her and love for the unknown celestial goddess whom she is impersonating. Under heavenly guidance, he sets out on a long search for his unknown celestial mistress which leads him over the earth, under the earth, and under the sea. During his wanderings he receives divine encouragement that his quest will be successful. At the beginning of the fourth book, Phoebe assumes a second disguise — that of an Indian maid who has strayed from the rout of Bacchus — and succeeds in making Endymion renounce herself for the Indian maid whom she is now impersonating. Endymion and the Indian maid fly through the air to Mount Latmos and Phoebe throws off her disguise, confesses her two-fold deception, and announces that she has the consent of the gods to make Endymion her immortal lover. This device, Phoebe's wooing of Endymion in the guise of another woman, is both the complicating and the resolving force of Drayton's *Endimion and Phoebe* and Keats's *Endymion*. It does not appear in any other version of the myth and it is, therefore, the most convincing evidence that Keats was indebted to Drayton's *Endimion and Phoebe*.

Keats derived most of the individual features of *Endymion* from either Drayton's *Endimion and Phoebe* or his *Man in the Moone*. The description of Mount Latmos at the beginning of *Endymion* was suggested to Keats, it is probable, by a similar description of the mountain at the beginning of *Endimion and Phoebe*. The feast of Pan, which follows the description of Mount Latmos, was suggested by the Feast of Pan at the beginning of *The Man in the Moone*. The nuptial festival of Endymion and Phoebe at the end of the poem was suggested by the similar festival at the end of *Endimion and Phoebe*.

Keats derived three other features from both *Endimion and Phoebe* and *The Man in the Moone*. In *Endimion and Phoebe*, Drayton described the flight of Endymion and Phoebe through the air as follows:

Thus whilst he layd his head vpon her lap,  
 Shee in a fiery Mantle doth him wrap,  
 And carries him vp from this lumpish mould,  
 Into the skyes, whereas he might behold,  
 The earth in perfect roundness of a ball.

. . . . .





Keats derived the blue color of the mantle of Phoebe (I.627 *et seq.*) and the robe of Glaucus (III.196 *et seq.*) from *Endimion and Phoebe*, but he drew the other details of the robe of Glaucus, especially its cinematographic quality, from *The Man in the Moone*. He condensed and refined Drayton's incoherent and confused description, which consists of nearly eighty verses, into one of the most vivid and concise descriptions in *Endymion*.

A final instance of Keats's indebtedness to Drayton occurs in the second book of *Endymion* (vv. 569 *et seq.*), in which Venus told Adonis that she had heard that Endymion loved some immortal.

There is no trace  
Of this is heaven: I have mark'd each cheek,  
And find it is the vainest thing to seek;  
And that of all things 'tis kept secretest.

In both *Endimion and Phoebe* and *The Man in the Moone*, Phoebe's departure from the sky to visit Endymion excited and displeased the gods. The tone of Phoebus' remarks in *The Man in the Moone* suggested evidently that of Venus' remarks in *Endymion* —

And Phoebus, her oft missing did inquire,  
If that elsewhere she borrowed other fire. . . .

Keats developed the myth of Endymion and Phoebe far beyond the brief outlines in Drayton's two poems. He introduced three other Greek myths, the myths of Venus and Adonis, Glaucus and Scylla, and Alpheus and Arethusa, as episodes, and he employed many other myths in the form of suggestive allusions. His friends attributed his knowledge of Greek mythology to classical dictionaries, such as Lempriere's *Classical Dictionary*, Spence's *Polymetis*, Tooke's *Pantheon*, and Baldwin's (or William Godwin's) *Pantheon*. He presented, altered, and created Greek myths in the free, imaginative, and romantic spirit of the Renaissance poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He acquired much of his knowledge of these myths from vivid, vigorous, Renaissance translations of Greek and Roman literature and history—Chapman's *The Iliads of Homer*, *The Odysseys of Homer*, *Homer's Batrochomyomachia*, *Hymns*, and *Epigrams*, and *Hesiod's Works and Days*; Sandys's *Ovid's Metamorphosis Englished, Mythologized, and Represented in Figures*; and Booth's *The Historical Library of Diodorus the Sicilian, in fifteen books*. He never learned Greek, but he had a smattering of Latin. He made a complete translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* in the latter part of his residence in the Clarke School and the first part of his apprenticeship to the surgeon in Edmonton. He possessed a copy of

Ovid's *Metamorphoseon* in the original Latin, which was given to him in the midsummer of 1812 and which he probably translated in part at least.

In Brown's list of the books which Keats possessed at the time of his death and some of which he may have possessed as early as 1817, there are several books from which he might have acquired a general knowledge of Greek culture. They are Spelman's *Xenophon, Poetae Minores Graeci*, Terence's *Comoediae*, and Potter's *Grecian Antiquities*. He also possessed copies of Livy's *Roman History*, Adams' *Roman Antiquities*, and Vertot's *Roman Revolutions*.

Keats acquired the greater part of his knowledge of Greek mythology, however, and the vivid, romantic spirit in which he developed Greek myths from the rich allusions and adaptations in the poetry of his Renaissance masters, Spenser, Shakespeare, Marlowe, Drayton, Jonson, Fletcher, and Milton. He possessed also a copy of the works of Rabelais in the original French, and he derived some of the matter of *Endymion*, as I shall show, from this great Renaissance French writer.

The episode of Venus and Adonis in the second book of *Endymion* is a fine example of the way in which Keats combined details from his sources. Endymion, after wandering through a thousand mazes, comes upon a myrtle-walled chamber, a natural bower, in which he discovers Adonis sleeping upon a silken couch. One of the cupids who are watching over Adonis relates the myth to Endymion. Venus loved Adonis, a mortal youth, and wooed him; but the boy refused her amorous plea, content to make a cold retreat when on the pleasant grass such love, lovelorn, lay sorrowing. When Adonis was slain by the wild boar, however, Venus went distract and mad:

away she flew  
To Jove's high throne, and by her plainings drew  
Immortal tear-drops down the thunderer's beard;  
Whereon, it was decreed he should be rear'd  
Each summer time to life.

As the cupid finishes his story, Venus arrives in a silver car drawn by white doves, to awake Adonis from his winter sleep. After she awakes and embraces Adonis, the goddess greets Endymion and promises him that he will win the celestial mistress whom he is seeking.

Keats derived the myth of Venus and Adonis from the tenth book of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, the third book of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (canto vi., stanzas 46 *et seq.*), and Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. He accepted the changes which Spenser and Shakespeare made in

Ovid's version. He derived Venus' persistent wooing of Adonis and Adonis' stubborn refusal to yield to her solicitations from Shakespeare's version. Shakespeare extracted this detail from Ovid's story of Salamacis and Hermaphroditus and introduced it into the story of Venus and Adonis. Keats derived the resurrection of Adonis to life and his residence in a bower as Venus' immortal paramour from Spenser's version. He derived the sleeping of Adonis in winter and his awakening to life and love in summer from Sandys's commentary upon the tenth book of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. Sandys interpreted the myth as a symbol of the progress of the seasons. Venus, he said, represents the earth and Adonis the sun. The wild boar, who slays Adonis, represents the winter, which diminishes the heat of the sun. Venus, or the earth, weeps when Adonis, the sun, retires to the six winter signs of the zodiac, and she rejoices when the sun returns to the equator.

Keats derived the myth of Alpheus and Arethusa from the fifth book of Ovid's *Metamorphosis* and the myth of Glaucus and Scylla from the thirteenth and fourteenth books. He made considerable changes in the myth of Glaucus and Scylla. Glaucus, Ovid said, was a fisherman who became a sea-god by eating an herb which had given life to the fishes which he had caught. He fell in love with Scylla, a nymph, who fled in fear from his impetuous wooing. In his despair he sought the aid of Circe, the enchantress who lived on an island in the sea. Circe, who was exceedingly amorous, offered him her own love; when he refused it she transformed Scylla, her rival, into a monster whose lower extremities were engirt with ferocious dogs. Glaucus, in Keats's romance, was a fisherman of immortal stock who became a denizen of the sea by the power of his aspiration for a larger life. He wooed Scylla in vain and sought the assistance of Circe. He succumbed to the alluring beauty of the enchantress and forgot Scylla. One day, however, he discovered Circe torturing the men whom she had transformed into beasts and fled in horror and terror. He was overtaken by Circe and condemned to pass a thousand years in senility and then to die. In the sea, to which he was forced to return, he discovered the lifeless body of Scylla, whom Circe had slain, and he placed it in a crystal edifice. Following the instructions of a magic book which he had rescued from a wrecked ship, he gathered the bodies of lovers who were drowned in the sea and placed them in the same edifice. He was discovered at length by Endymion, who, fulfilling the prophecy in the magic book, restored Glaucus and Scylla and the lovers whom Glaucus had placed in the edifice to life and youth and love.

Keats altered the myth to make it a proper symbol of a particular aspect of the theme of his romance. The altered details — the succumbing of Glaucus to the beauty of Circe, the forgetting of Scylla, the discovery of Circe's real nature, the reaction against her, and the transformation of Glaucus and Scylla — were suggested to Keats, I believe, by the episode of Fradubio and Fraelissa in the first book of *The Faerie Queene*. The magic book which Glaucus rescued from a shipwreck was suggested, it is probable, by the magic book of Prospero in *The Tempest*. The magical rites were influenced, Sir Sidney Colvin believed, by those in the tale of Bebr Salim in *The Thousand and One Nights*.

It is impossible, in the scope of this treatise, to make a complete analysis of the sources of the matter — the diction, the imagery, the allusions, the ideas — with which Keats developed the plot of *Endymion*. When he began the composition of the romance, we have seen, he began an intensive study of Shakespeare's plays; and he drew more of the matter of the romance from Shakespeare than from any other poet. He was deeply indebted also to Spenser, Milton, Drayton, Chapman, Browne, and other poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He was influenced by Wordsworth especially in the third book, and by Coleridge in the fourth book. A complete analysis of *Endymion*, to which many scholars have contributed, reveals the whole range of Keats's natural, social, and literary experience.

I shall analyze two passages of *Endymion* — the Hymn to Pan in the first book and the Song of the Indian Maid in the fourth book — to show the process by which Keats transfused the matter of his sources into poetry. The Festival of Pan, which occurs at the beginning of *Endymion*, was suggested to Keats, we have seen, by the similar festival at the beginning of Drayton's *Man in the Moone*. Keats described a woodland altar in the midst of a mighty forest on the sides of Mount Latmos. "While the silent workings of the dawn were busiest," he said, a procession of worshippers approached the altar — "a troup of little children garlanded," young damsels dancing and singing, sunburnt shepherds, a venerable priest, a multitude of people, and Endymion, the prince of the shepherds, in a fair wrought car. After the priest had given thanks to Pan and offered a sacrifice upon the altar, the worshippers sang the Hymn to Pan.

O Thou, whose mighty palace roof doth hang  
From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth  
Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death  
Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness;

Who lov'st to see the hamadryads dress  
Their ruffled locks where meeting hazels darken;  
And through whole solemn hours dost sit, and hearken  
The dreary melody of bedded reeds —  
In desolate places, where dank moisture breeds  
The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth,  
Bethinking thee, how melancholy loth  
Thou wast to lose fair Syrinx — do thou now,  
By thy love's milky brow!  
By all the trembling mazes that she ran,  
Hear us, great Pan!

O thou, for whose soul-soothing quiet, turtles  
Passion their voices cooingly 'mong myrtles,  
What time thou wanderest at eventide  
Through sunny meadows, that outskirt the side  
Of thine enmossed realms: O thou, to whom  
Broad leaved fig trees even now foredoom  
Their ripen'd fruitage; yellow girted bees  
Their golden honeycombs; our village leas  
Their fairest blossom'd beans and popped corn;  
The chuckling linnet its five young unborn,  
To sing for thee; low creeping strawberries  
Their summer coolness; pent up butterflies  
Their freckled wings; yea, the fresh budding year  
All its completions — be quickly near,  
By every wind that nods the mountain pine,  
O forester divine!

Thou, to whom every fawn and satyr flies  
For willing service; whether to surprise  
The squatted hare while in half sleeping fit;  
Or upward ragged precipices flit  
To save poor lambkins from the eagle's maw;  
Or by mysterious enticement draw  
Bewildered shepherds to their path again;  
Or to tread breathless round the frothy main,  
And gather up all fancifullest shells  
For thee to tumble into Naiads' cells,  
And, being hidden, laugh at their out-peeping;  
Or to delight thee with fantastic leaping,  
The while they pelt each other on the crown  
With silvery oak apples, and fir cones brown —  
By all the echoes that about thee ring,  
Hear us, O satyr king!

O Harkener to the loud clapping shears,  
While ever and anon to his shorn peers  
A ram goes bleating: Winder of the horn,  
When snouted wild-boars routing tender corn

Anger our huntsmen: Breather round our farms,  
 To keep off mildews, and all weather harms.  
 Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds,  
 That come a swooning over hollow grounds,  
 And wither drearily on barren moors.  
 Dread opener of the mysterious doors  
 Leading to universal knowledge — see,  
 Great son of Dryope,  
 The many that are come to pay their vows  
 With leaves about their brows!

Be still the unimaginable lodge  
 For solitary thinkings, such as dodge  
 Conception to the very bourne of heaven,  
 Then leave the naked brain: be still the leaven,  
 That spreading in this dull and clodded earth  
 Gives it a touch ethereal — a new birth:  
 Be still a symbol of immensity;  
 A firmament reflected in a sea;  
 An element filling the space between;  
 An unknown — but no more: we humbly screen  
 With uplift hands our foreheads, lowly bending,  
 And giving out a shout most heaven rending,  
 Conjure thee to receive our humble Paeon,  
 Upon thy Mount Lycean!

### Stanza I

- ✓ (A comparison of the allusion to the myth of Pan and Syrinx in the first stanza, which Keats composed probably in April 1817, with his allusion to the myth in *I stood tip-toe upon a little hill*, which he composed in December 1816, reveals his rapid outgrowth of sentimentality. He outgrew this eighteenth-century sensibility as well as Hunt's familiar style by studying heroic art — the Elgin Marbles, Chapman's *Homer*, and Shakespeare's plays. In *I stood tip-toe upon a little hill* Keats said that the poet, who caught a glimpse of fauns and dryads in a forest, felt uplifted from the world —

Telling us how fair, trembling Syrinx fled  
 Arcadian Pan, with such a fearful dread.  
 Poor nymph, — poor Pan, — how he did weep to find,  
 Nought but a lovely sighing of the wind  
 Along the reedy stream; a half heard strain,  
 Full of sweet desolation — balmy pain.

When Keats rewrote this allusion four months later in the Hymn to Pan, he kept its form in every detail but he purged it of sentimentality:

Bethinking thee, how melancholy loth  
 Thou wast to lose fair Syrinx — do thou now,  
 By thy love's milky brow!  
 By all the trembling mazes that she ran,  
 Hear us, great Pan!

He converted the sentimental sighing of the wind among the reeds, "a half heard strain, Full of sweet desolation — balmy pain," into the intensely imaginative verse, "The dreary melody of bedded reeds."

Keats knew the myth of Pan and Syrinx in Sandys's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, Chapman's translation of the *Homeric Hymn to Pan*, English poems of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and classical dictionaries. He called Pan "Arcadian Pan," for in most of his sources the action of the myth was placed in Arcadia. He derived the details, the syntax, and the phraseology of his two allusions from Sandys's *Ovid* (Book I):

Amongst the *Hamadryad's Nonacrinæ*  
 (On cold *Arcadian* Hills) for beautie fam'd,  
 A *Nais* dwelt; the Nymphs, her *Syrinx* nam'd.  
 . . . *Pan*, crown'd with Pines, returning  
 From steepe *Lycaeus*, saw her; and, loue-burning,  
 Thus said: Faire Virgin, grant a Gods request;  
 And be his Wife. Surcease to tell the rest;  
*How* from his prayers shee fled, as from her shame,  
 Till to smooth *Ladon's* sandy banks shee came.  
 There stopt; implores the liquid Sisters aid,  
 To change her shape, and pittie a forc't Maid.  
*Pan*, when he thought he had his *Syrinx* claspt  
 Betweene his arms, Reeds for her body graspt.  
 He sighs: they, stir'd therewith, report againe  
 A mournfull sound, like one that did complaine . . . etc.

Sandys's "Surcease to tell . . . How . . . shee fled" became in Keats's 1816 version "Telling us how fair, trembling Syrinx fled" and in his 1817 version "Bethinking thee, how melancholy loth Thou wast to lose fair Syrinx." The adjective "fair" applied to "Syrinx" came from Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals* (Book 2, Song 4), from which, as we shall see, came other details of the Hymn to Pan. "The silver Ladon," Pan said,

The silver Ladon on his sandy shore  
 Heard my complaints, and those cool groves that be  
 Shading the breast of lovely *Arcady*  
 Witnesse[d] the tears which I for Syrinx spent:  
*Syrinx* the fair, from whom the instrument  
 That fills your feasts with joy . . .  
 Had his beginning.

Keats's description of the palace of Pan,

O Thou, whose mighty palace roof doth hang  
From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth  
Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death  
Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness,

was suggested by Browne's description of the forest den of Pan in the same passage in *Britannia's Pastorals* —

Here in a nook made by another mount,  
(Whose stately oaks are in no less account  
For height or spreading, than the proudest be  
That from Oeta look on Thessaly,)  
Rudely o'erhung there is a vaulted cave,  
That in the day as sullen shadows gave,  
As evening to the woods An uncouth place,  
(Where hags and goblins might retire a space), . . .

Keats preserved the rugged grandeur of Browne's description but dissolved the elements of horror. His "unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness" in the dark forest palace foreshadows the fifth stanza of his *Ode to a Nightingale*.

Keats's direct address to Pan,

O Thou. . . .  
By thy love's milky brow!  
By all the trembling mazes that she ran,  
Hear us, great Pan!

was suggested by a similar address in Hymn IV of Ben Jonson's *Pan's Anniversary*, a masque —

Great Pan, the father of our peace and pleasure,  
Who giv'st us all this leisure,  
Hear what thy hallow'd troop of herdsmen pray. . . .

### Stanza II

In the second stanza Keats represented all things and creatures which grow and thrive on the earth as offering their produce to Pan, the god of nature. In Sandys's commentary upon the fourteenth book of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, he read that

Men worship nature by the name of *Pan*  
A man halfe-goat, withall, a God halfe-man.  
[Quoted from Alciatus. Emb. XCVII.]

He had a precedent for an enumeration of the offerings to Pan in Ben Jonson's *Pan's Anniversary* and in Browne's *Britannia's Pas-*



*torals*. Most of the offerings which he listed, however, were, it seems, his own invention. The image in the verses,

By every wind that nods the mountain pine,  
O forester divine!

was suggested by an image in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* (IV. ii. 174-175),

as the rud'st wind,  
That by the top doth take the mountain pine. . . .

In Sandys's *Ovid*, and in his other sources of mythology, Keats learned that the pine tree was consecrated to Pan, the god of shepherds. Sandys, in his commentary upon the fourteenth book of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, observed:

The browes of Pan are crowned with Pine branches, because those trees adorne the tops of the Mountaines.

In this case, it is possible, we can trace the process of association by which Keats recalled the elements of his verses. Remembering that the pine tree was consecrated to Pan, he recalled Sandys's statement that "The browes of Pan are crowned with Pine branches, because those trees adorne the tops of the Mountaines"; and, with this as a link, he recalled Shakespeare's image, "as the rud'st wind That by the top doth take the mountain pine."

### *Stanza III*

In the third stanza Keats represented the satyrs as being in the service of Pan, their king, protecting shepherds and their flocks, and playing tricks upon the nymphs. In all his sources of mythology he found Pan described as the chief, or the king, of the satyrs. He derived several details of the stanza from Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, a pastoral play, the action of which begins at the end of the annual feast to Pan. Throughout the play, a satyr labors in willing service to Pan. In the first scene of Act I, he runs through the woods, gathering fruit for Pan; and in the first scene of Act III, he walks through the woods, protecting shepherds.

Now, whilst the moon doth rule the sky,  
And the stars, whose feeble light  
Gives a pale shadow to the night,  
Are up, great Pan commanded me  
To walk this grove about. . . .  
To see what mortals lose their way,  
And by a false fire, seeming bright,  
Train them in and leave them right. . . .



Keats, combining details from these sources, made the satyrs assist Pan in playing tricks upon the naiads.

Or to tread breathless round the frothy main,  
And gather up all fancifullest shells  
For thee to tumble into Naiads' cells,  
And, being hidden, laugh at their out-peeping;  
Or to delight thee with fantastic leaping,  
The while they pelt each other on the crown  
With silvery oak apples, and fir cones brown —

#### Stanza IV

In the fourth stanza Keats represented Pan as the personal god and protector of shepherds. The verses,

O Harkener to the loud clapping shears,  
While ever and anon to his shorn peers  
A ram goes bleating. . . ,

and

. Breather round our farms,  
To keep off mildews, and all weather harms . . . ,

were derived from Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* and Ben Jonson's *Pan's Anniversary*. In Hymn II of Jonson's masque the shepherds sing:

Pan is our All, by him we *breathe*, we live,  
We move, we are, 'tis he our lambs doth rear,  
*Our flocks doth bless*, and from the store doth give  
The warm and finer fleeces that we wear.  
*He keeps away all heats and colds*,  
Drives all diseases from our folds, etc.

The "weather harms" which sheep may receive is mentioned also in Fletcher's pastoral play. In the first scene of Act II the Priest of Pan warns the shepherds to fold their flocks; for the air begins to thicken, the sun to set, and night to rise from under ground —

At whose rising *mists unsound*,  
*Damps and vapours* fly apace. . . .

Jonson's "by him we breathe," associated with "He keeps away all heats and colds," suggested Keats's "Breather round our farms, To keep off mildews, and all weather harms." In this case, the association was made by proximity instead of by similarity of thought. Fletcher's "mists unsound, Damps and vapours" reinforced Jonson's "heats and colds," suggesting Keats's "mildews, and all weather harms."

The verses,

Winder of the horn,  
When snouted wild-boars routing tender corn  
Anger our huntsmen . . . ,

were derived from Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals* (Book 2, Song 4). Pan, referring to a plant which he had consecrated to Philocel, a maiden who was slain by a wolf, said.

This must I succour, this must I defend,  
*And from wild boars' rooting ever shend.*

The verses,

Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds,  
That come a swooning over hollow grounds,  
And wither drearily on barren moors . . . ,

were derived, as Sir Sidney Colvin suggested, from Baldwin's *Pantheon*:

All the strange, mysterious, and unaccountable sounds which were heard in solitary places, were attributed to Pan, the God of rural scenery.

#### *Stanza V*

In the fifth stanza and in the following verses of the fourth stanza, Keats represented Pan as the symbol of the universal —

Dread opener of the mysterious doors  
Leading to universal knowledge. . . .

He derived this conception of Pan from Lempriere's *Classical Dictionary*, Tooke's *Pantheon*, and Sandys's commentary upon the fourteenth book of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. Tooke said that "*Pan . . . is a symbol of the universal world*" and that "the spotted skin that he wears, is an image of the starry firmament."

He was the emblem of fecundity [Lempriere said], and they looked upon him as *the principle of all things*. His horns, as some observe, represented the rays of the sun, and the brightness of the *heavens* was expressed by the vivacity and rudeness of his complexion. The star, which he wore on his breast, was *the symbol of the firmament*, and his hairy legs and feet denoted the inferior parts of the *earth*, such as the woods and plants.

The "body and habit" of Pan, Sandys said, "expresseth Vniversall Nature"—

The hornes on his head expressing the rayes of the Sun and Moone . . . the vpper part of his body, like a mans, representing the heavens; not only in regard of the beautie thereof, but of his reason and dominion: His goatish nether parts

carrying the similitude of the earth; rough, overgrown with woods and bushes; his feet cloven in regard of the earth's stability . . . The browes of Pan are crowned with Pine branches, because those trees adorne the tops of the Mountaines; his mantle the skin of a spotted Panther presenting according to Probus, both starres and flowers . . . or rather the rare diversity of things. The sevenfold pipe which he blowes on, the variety of winds, with their inconstant changes. He is said to liue solitarily, in that there is but one world; to bee the God of shepherds, and Heardsmen, because the earth affordeth pasture for their flocks and heards; of whose sudden frights, and flights at every noise from the woods or rocks, those are said, who feare without cause, to be possesst with a Panick terrour. . . .

In the fifth stanza, Keats combined and fused not only the ideas but also the words of these allegorical interpretations of Pan.

Be still the unimaginable lodge  
 For solitary thinkings; such as dodge  
 Conception to the very bourne of heaven,  
 Then leave the naked brain: be still the leaven,  
 That spreading in this dull and clodded earth  
 Gives it a touch ethereal — a new birth:  
 Be still a symbol of immensity;  
 A firmament reflected in a sea;  
 An element filling the space between;  
 An unknown — but no more: we humbly screen  
 With uplift hands our foreheads, lowly bending,  
 And giving out a shout most heaven rending,  
 Conjure thee to receive our humble Paean,  
 Upon thy Mount Lycean!

From Lempriere, Tooke, and Sandys, Keats derived the conception of Pan as the symbol of "universal nature," the upper part of his body representing the "heavens" and the lower part of his body the "earth." From Lempriere and Tooke he derived the conception of Pan as a symbol of a "firmament" and from Sandys the idea that Pan lived "solitarily." He created the symbol of Pan as the "unimaginable lodge For solitary thinkings; such as dodge Conception to the very bourne of heaven" by combining elements from Sandys, Tooke, and Lempriere with elements from a passage in Marston's *Antonio and Melida* (Part I, IV. i. 18-22):

. . . for when discursive powers flie out,  
 And rome in progresse *through the bounds of heaven*,  
 The soule itselfe gallops along with them,  
 As chieftaine of this winged troope of thought,  
 Whilst the *dull lodge of spirit* standeth waste. . . .

Keats's use of the "bourne of heaven" instead of Marston's the "bounds of heaven" was influenced by a passage in Hamlet's soliloquy *To be or not to be* (III. i. 78-80):

The undiscovered country from whose *bourne*  
No traveller returns . . .

In a later poem, *Lines written in the Highlands after a Visit to Burns's Country*, he employed "bourne" together with other details from Hamlet's soliloquy.

x (The spirit of Wordsworth is strongly suffused through the Hymn to Pan, especially in the fifth and last stanza. To paraphrase a verse of the stanza, Wordsworth's spirit was the leaven that, spreading in the dull and clodded matter of Sandys, Tooke, Baldwin, and Lempriere, gave it the touch ethereal. There is a suggestion of Wordsworth's diction in the phrase "solitary thinkings.")

This analysis of the matter out of which Keats composed the Hymn to Pan increases our admiration for the force of his genius. The poem is not an artificial mosaic of borrowed details; it is a vital, organic whole. The matter of its sources was broken up into its primal elements and combined and intuited into a fresh and original form. This study of the Hymn to Pan in relation to its sources, in the second place, sheds light upon the process of poetic composition. It supports and confirms, in my opinion, that theory of poetic composition which Wordsworth defined in the preface to the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. Keats, whose mind was as analytical as it was imaginative, was intensely interested in the process of composition. He made very illuminating remarks upon certain stages in the process of composition, and those remarks show that he accepted Wordsworth's theory.

Wordsworth based his theory of composition and indeed his whole system of poetry upon the empirical principles of sensation and association. He developed it in collaboration with Coleridge and derived his distinction between fancy and imagination from Coleridge, who had found a suggestion for it in Jean Paul Richter's *Vorschule der Aesthetik*. Coleridge, turning from empiricism to transcendentalism, attached his theory of imagination to a "seminal principle" which is transcendental. Wordsworth's theory of composition, however, remained essentially empirical.

A poet, Wordsworth insisted, is a man speaking to men. His faculties differ from those of other men in degree but not in kind. He "is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feelings as are produced in him in that manner." His thoughts and feelings, however, are the general thoughts and feelings of all men. His poetry can be understood by other men, therefore; and, we might add, the process

by which he composes his poetry can be analyzed. His thoughts and feelings, moreover, develop by the process of association out of his sensations or sensuous impressions of the external world.

Wordsworth defined four stages in the process by which a particular experience is transformed in the mind of the poet into a poem.

Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, similar to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on. . . .

Keats accepted Wordsworth's theory of composition as true in the case of egotistic (or lyrical) poetry. He developed his system of negatively capable (or dramatic) poetry, however, from Shakespeare's plays. The "highest exertion of Power," he said in a comment which I have already quoted, is to describe the passions of other men. The "next step," he added, "is to paint from memory of gone self storm." His "memory of gone self storm" is a vivid paraphrase of Wordsworth's "emotion . . . recollected in tranquillity."

The first stage in the genesis of a poem, according to Wordsworth's analysis, is the stage of experience, in which the poet receives sensations or impressions of a particular scene. These sensations, entering into his mind, produce a state of strong emotion. The greater part of Wordsworth's poetry had its origin in his sensuous experience. Keats's poetry, on the contrary, was derived from books — from the recorded experience of other men — as well as from his own sensuous experience. In the sonnet *How many bards gild the lapses of time!* Keats described the harmony with which details from these two sources entered into his mind as he composed his poetry. In the octave he acknowledged his indebtedness to the recorded experience of other poets:

How many bards gild the lapses of time!  
 A few of them have ever been the food  
 Of my delighted fancy, — I could brood  
 Over their beauties, earthly, or sublime:  
 And often, when I sit me down to rhyme,  
 These will in throngs before my mind intrude:  
 But no confusion, no disturbance rude  
 Do they occasion; 'tis a pleasing chime.

In the sestet he expressed his indebtedness to his own sensuous experience:

So the unnumber'd sounds that evening store;  
 The songs of birds — the whisp'ring of the leaves —  
 The voice of waters — the great bell that heaves  
 With solemn sound, — and thousand others more,  
 That distance of recognizance bereaves,  
 Make pleasing music, and not wild uproar.

In the second stage of composition, Wordsworth believed, the sensations which the poet receives from the particular experience, together with the emotions which they arouse, sink into his memory. He censured Scott's method of taking notes of his sensuous impressions.

He should have left his pencil and notebook at home [Wordsworth told Aubrey de Vere], fixed his eye, as he walked, with a reverent attention on all that surrounded him, and taken all into a heart that could understand and enjoy. Then, after several days had passed by, he should have interrogated his memory as to the scene. He would have discovered that while much of what he had admired was preserved to him, much was also wisely obliterated. That which remained — the picture surviving in his mind — would have presented the ideal and essential truth of the scene, and done so, in a large part, by discarding much which, though in itself striking, was not characteristic. In every scene many of the most brilliant details are but accidental. A true eye for Nature does not note them, or at least does not dwell on them.

In this stage of composition, in the first place, sensuous impressions in the forms of images sink into the memory beneath the surface of consciousness. In the second place, these images undergo a modification in the subconscious depths of the memory: their accidental elements are dissipated and their essential elements are preserved. In the passage which I have quoted Wordsworth did not name the faculties which modify these images; but the faculties are evidently fancy and imagination, which he defined in the preface to the 1815 edition of his *Poems*. The imagination, in Wordsworth's sense of the word, has no reference to images which are merely faithful mental pictures of absent external objects. It denotes operations of the mind upon images of absent objects.

These processes of imagination are carried on [Wordsworth said] either by conferring additional properties upon an object, or abstracting from it some of those which it actually possesses, and thus enabling it to re-act upon the mind which hath performed the process like a new existence

The imagination also, Wordsworth said, causes images to modify one another — that is, it gives one image some of the qualities of another.



The Imagination also shapes and *creates* [he concluded] . . . By innumerable processes; and in none does it more delight than in that of consolidating numbers into unity, and dissolving and separating unity into number. . . .

Fancy differs from imagination, Wordsworth thought, in associating images in a capricious manner and without effecting much change in their nature.

Fancy does not require that the materials which she makes use of should be susceptible of change in their constitution from her touch; and, where they admit of modification, it is enough for her purpose if it be slight, limited, and evanescent. . . . The law under which the processes of Fancy are carried on is as capricious as the accidents of things, and the effects are surprising, playful, ludicrous, amusing, tender, or pathetic, as the objects happen to be appositely produced or fortunately combined.

Keats made little use, as far as I can discover, of Wordsworth's distinction between fancy and imagination. He agreed with Wordsworth, however, that the imagination operates upon images in the subconscious realms of the memory. In a letter which he wrote Bailey on November 22, 1817, he said:

— the simple imaginative Mind may have its rewards in the repetition of its own silent Working coming continually on the Spirit with a fine Suddenness —

In a letter which he wrote Reynolds on February 18, 1818, Keats described the way in which a page of "full Poesy or distilled Prose" supplied his imagination with matter and stimulated it into activity. At first his imagination operated upon the passage under the control of the conscious will. Let a man, he said, "on a certain day read a certain Page of full Poesy or distilled Prose, and let him wander with it, and muse upon it, and reflect upon it, and bring home to it, and prophesy upon it, and dream upon it. . . ." Afterwards his imagination operated upon this passage in revery and in sleep when the conscious mind was in abeyance.

When Man has arrived at a certain ripeness in intellect any one grand and spiritual passage serves him as a starting-post towards all "the two-and-thirty Palaces." How happy is such a voyage of conception, what delicious diligent Indolence! A doze upon a sofa does not hinder it, and a nap upon Clover engenders ethereal finger-pointings — the prattle of a child gives it wings, and the converse of middle-age a strength to beat them — a strain of music conducts to "an odd angle of the Isle," and when the leaves whisper it puts a girdle round the earth.

In this passage Keats recalled and employed a phrase from Shakespeare's *Tempest*, thereby illustrating as well as explaining the process of the imagination.

In the third stage in the genesis of a poem, Wordsworth said, the

poet, in a state of tranquillity, recalls his sensations of the particular scene in the form of images and contemplates them until his tranquillity disappears and an emotion, kindred to that which the sensations had aroused in him, is produced in his mind. In this final and conscious stage of composition the imagination operates upon the images which it recalls under the control of the judgment. Keats referred to this stage when he spoke of

The innumerable compositions and decompositions which take place between the intellect and its thousand materials before it arrives at that trembling delicate and snail-horn perception of beauty . . .

[Letter to Haydon, April 10, 1818.]

A comparison of the early drafts of Keats's poems with their final versions shows that in this last and conscious stage of composition he achieved some of his finest effects.

#### THE SONG OF THE INDIAN MAID

An analysis of the sources of the Song of the Indian Maid affords a fine demonstration of the processes of composition in Keats's mind. At the beginning of the fourth book, after Endymion had experienced the wonders of the ocean, he awoke out of a deep trance and found himself upon the surface of the earth. While he was piously offering up a hecatomb of vows to the gods, he heard an Indian maid lamenting her absence from her distant home on the Ganges. He drew near her and heard her bewail her lovelorn fate and assert the vital force of love. The grief of the Indian maid inspired him with pity and pity inspired him with love. After a brief but bitter mental struggle he relinquished the divine mistress whom he had sought in the various regions of the earth, avowed his love for the Indian maid, and entreated her to tell her woe. She

For pity sang this roundelay —

O Sorrow,  
Why dost borrow

The natural hue of health, from vermeil lips? —

To give maiden blushes  
To the white rose bushes?

Or is it thy dewy hand the daisy tips?

O Sorrow,  
Why dost borrow

The lustrous passion from a falcon-eye? —

To give the glow-worm light?  
Or, on a moonless night,

To tinge, on syren shores, the salt sea-spry?

O Sorrow,  
Why dost borrow  
The mellow ditties from a mourning tongue? —  
To give at evening pale  
Unto the nightingale,  
That thou mayst listen the cold dew among?

O Sorrow,  
Why dost borrow  
Heart's lightness from the merriment of May? —  
A lover would not tread  
A cowslip on the head,  
Though he should dance from eve till peep of day —  
Nor any drooping flower  
Held sacred for thy bower,  
Wherever he may sport himself and play

To Sorrow,  
I bade good-morrow,  
And thought to leave her far away behind;  
But cheerly, cheerly,  
She loves me dearly;  
She is so constant to me, and so kind  
I would deceive her  
And so leave her,  
But ah! she is so constant and so kind.

Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,  
I sat a weeping: in the whole world wide  
There was no one to ask me why I wept, —  
And so I kept  
Brimming the water-lily cups with tears  
Cold as my fears.

Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,  
I sat a weeping: what enamour'd bride,  
Cheated by shadowy wooer from the clouds,  
But hides and shrouds  
Beneath dark palm trees by a river side?

And as I sat, over the light blue hills  
There came a noise of revellers: the rills  
Into the wide stream came of purple hue —  
'Twas Bacchus and his crew!  
The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills  
From kissing cymbals made a merry din —  
'Twas Bacchus and his kin!  
Like to a moving vintage down they came,  
Crown'd with green leaves, and faces all on flame;  
All madly dancing through the pleasant valley,  
To scare thee, Melancholy!

O then, O then, thou wast a simple name!  
 And I forgot thee, as the berried holly  
 By shepherds is forgotten, when, in June,  
 Tall chestnuts keep away the sun and moon: —  
     I rush'd into the folly!

Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,  
 Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,  
     With sidelong laughing;  
 And little rills of crimson wine imbrued  
 His plump white arms, and shoulders, enough white  
     For Venus' pearly bite.  
 And near him rode Silenus on his ass,  
 Pelted with flowers as he on did pass  
     Tipsily quaffing

Whence came ye, merry Damsels! whence came ye!  
 So many, and so many, and such glee?  
 Why have ye left your bowers desolate,  
     Your lutes, and gentler fate? —  
 "We follow Bacchus! Bacchus on the wing,  
     A conquering!  
 Bacchus, young Bacchus! good or ill betide,  
 We dance before him thorough kingdoms wide: —  
 Come hither, lady fair, and joined be  
     To our wild minstrelsy!"

Whence came ye, jolly Satyrs! whence came ye!  
 So many, and so many, and such glee?  
 Why have ye left your forest haunts, why left  
     Your nuts in oak-tree cleft? —  
 "For wine, for wine we left our kernel tree,  
 For wine we left our heath, and yellow brooms,  
     And cold mushrooms;  
 For wine we follow Bacchus through the earth;  
 Great God of breathless cups and chirping mirth! —  
 Come hither, lady fair, and joined be  
     To our mad minstrelsy!"

Over wide streams and mountains great we went,  
 And, save when Bacchus kept his ivy tent,  
 Onward the tiger and the leopard pants,  
     With Asian elephants:  
 Onward these myriads — with song and dance,  
 With zebras striped, and sleek Arabians' prance,  
 Web-footed alligators, crocodiles,  
 Bearing upon their scaly backs, in files,  
 Plump infant laughers mimicking the coil  
 Of seamen, and stout galley-rowers' toil:  
 With toying oars and silken sails they glide,  
     Nor care for wind and tide.

Mounted on panthers' furs and lions' manes,  
 From rear to van they scour about the plains;  
 A three days' journey in a moment done:  
 And always, at the rising of the sun,  
 About the wilds they hunt with spear and horn,  
 On spleenful unicorn.

I saw Osirian Egypt kneel adown  
 Before the vine-wreath crown!  
 I saw parch'd Abyssinia rouse and sing  
 To the silver cymbals' ring!  
 I saw the whelming vintage hotly pierce  
 Old Tartary the fierce!  
 The kings of Inde their jewel-sceptres vail,  
 And from their treasures scatter pearled hail;  
 Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans,  
 And all his priesthood moans;  
 Before young Bacchus' eye-wink turning pale. —  
 Into these regions came I following him,  
 Sick hearted, weary — so I took a whim  
 To stray away into these forests drear  
 Alone, without a peer:  
 And I have told thee all thou mayest hear.

Young stranger!  
 I've been a ranger  
 In search of pleasure throughout every clime:  
 Alas, 'tis not for me!  
 Bewitch'd I sure must be,  
 To lose in grieving all my maiden prime.

Come then, Sorrow!  
 Sweetest Sorrow!  
 Like an own babe I nurse thee on my breast:  
 I thought to leave thee  
 And deceive thee,  
 But now of all the world I love thee best.

There is not one,  
 No, no, not one  
 But thee to comfort a poor lonely maid;  
 Thou art her mother,  
 And her brother,  
 Her playmate, and her wooer in the shade.

Sir Sidney Colvin believed that he had discovered the source of the Indian maid in a fragment of prose which Walter Cooper Dendy said that Keats composed in the lecture room of St. Thomas's Hospital while the precepts of Sir Astley Cooper fell unheeded on his ear. Dendy quoted the fragment in *The Philosophy of Mystery* (1841). The words of the fragment are spelled in a crude but consistent imitation of mediaeval English diction.

Whenne Alexandre the Conqueroure was wayfayringe in y<sup>e</sup> londe of Inde, there mette hym a damoselle of marveillouse beaultie slepynge uponne the herbys and flourys. He colde ne loke uponne her withouten grete plesance, and he was welle nighthe loste in wondrement. Her forme was everyche whytte lyke y<sup>e</sup> fayrest carvyng of Quene Cythere, onlie thatte y<sup>t</sup> was swellyd and blushyd wyth warmthe and lyffe wythalle

Her forhed was as whytte as ys the snowe whyche y<sup>e</sup> talle hed of a Norwegian pyne stelythe from y<sup>e</sup> northerne wynde. One of her fayre hondes was yplaced thereonne, and thus whytte wyth whytte was ymyngld as y<sup>e</sup> gode Arthure saythe, lyke whyttest lyllys yspredde on whyttest snowe; and her bryghte eyne whenne she them oped, sparklyd lyke Hesperus through an evenyng cloude.

Theye were yclosyd yn slepe, save that two slauntynge raies shotte to her mouthe, and were theyre bathyd yn sweetenesse, as whenne bye chaunce y<sup>e</sup> moone fyndeth a banke of violettes and droppethe thereonne y<sup>e</sup> sylverie dewe.

The authoure was goyng onne withouten describynge y<sup>e</sup> ladye's breste, thenne lo, a genyus appearyd — "Cuthberte," sayeth he, "an thou canst not describe y<sup>e</sup> ladye's breste, and fynde a simile thereunto, I forbyde thee to proceede yn thy romaunt." Thys, I kennd fulle welle, far surpassyd my feble powres, and forthwythe I was fayne to droppe my quille.

Sir Sidney Colvin suggested that this fragment of a romance was inspired by *The Lay of Aristotle*, which was printed in a collection of lays in three volumes, published in London in 1815 and entitled *Fabliaux or Tales, Abridged From French Manuscripts of the XIIth And XIIIth Centuries* by M. Le Grand, *Selected and Translated Into English Verse By The Late G. L. Way, Esq.*

*The Lay of Aristotle* relates a humorous, amorous episode of Alexander's conquest of India. After Alexander had cast down suppliant India beneath his feet, he fell a victim to the beauty of an Indian maid and his dreams of conquest faded away. His warriors, becoming impatient, chose Aristotle, his tutor, to remonstrate with him; and he was persuaded at length to relinquish his mistress, who, sore distressed,

Pass'd her sad hours in solitude and tears,  
And wail'd his faithless heart no longer hers.

The Indian maid regained her dominion over Alexander, however, by making Aristotle, the philosopher who scorned love, an abject and ridiculous slave to amorous passion.

The Song of the Indian Maid represents a fusion in Keats's mind of two distinct stories — the mediaeval *Lay of Aristotle* and the Greek myth of Bacchus. Two episodes of the myth of Bacchus entered into the song — the episode of Bacchus and Ariadne and that of Bacchus' conquest of India and other eastern countries. The association of Alexander and Bacchus was already made in Keats's

sources. Sandys, in his commentary upon the fourth book of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, said:

Alexander having conquered these Countries [India], in imitation of Bacchus returned with his triumphant Army crowned with Ivy. . . .

Spence, in his *Polymetis*, observed:

Pliny, in particular, speaks of him [Bacchus] as a more celebrated conqueror than Alexander the Great.

And in a note Spence added:

The most strained compliment that the highest flatterers of Alexander the Great could pay him, was to say he equalled or excelled Bacchus and Hercules, in the extent of his conquests.

The Indian maid and Ariadne were associated and identified in Keats's mind by the association of their lovers, Alexander and Bacchus, and also by a similar incident in their lives — the Indian maid was deserted by Alexander and Ariadne was deserted by Theseus.

It is believed, on the authority of Severn, that the Song of the Indian Maid was inspired by Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*. William Sharp, in his *Life and Letters of Joseph Severn*, said that Severn and Keats made a special visit to the National Gallery in London to see Titian's painting:

Keats was deeply impressed and soon after read to his friend the now famous description of Bacchus and his crew in the *Endymion*.

In *Sleep and Poetry*, which Keats completed in December 1816, he described vividly and accurately the central incident in Titian's painting —

the swift bound  
Of Bacchus from his chariot, when his eye  
Made Ariadne's cheek look blushing.

In the Song of the Indian Maid, however, which he composed in November 1817, he introduced many details which are not in Titian's painting. He drew these details, as he had drawn those of the Hymn to Pan, from classical dictionaries, translations of classical literature, and English poems of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He derived a great many of the details also from the fifth book of Rabelais' great satire and a few from Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan*. It is quite possible that Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* was the initial spark which set Keats's imagination to work analyzing, combining, and fusing the details from other sources.

(The Song of the Indian Maid falls into two parts — the Apos-

trophe to Sorrow, which comprises the introduction and the conclusion, and the Triumphal March of Bacchus, which is the body. The Apostrophe to Sorrow is one of the few and one of the finest pure lyrics in Keats's poetry. He was intensely emotional but he was too richly sensuous to move with graceful freedom in the light, swift rhythms of the lyric. He moved with greater ease, for instance, in the slower, heavier rhythms of the Triumphal March of Bacchus than in the lighter, swifter rhythms of the Apostrophe to Sorrow.)

Only a few elements of the Apostrophe to Sorrow have been traced to their sources. "Sea-spry" for "sea-spray" is doubtless, as H. B. Forman suggested, a reminiscence of Sandys's *Ovid's Metamorphosis* (XI. 499). The verses,

A lover would not tread  
A cowslip on the head,

were inspired, as Ernest de Sélincourt pointed out, by a passage in Milton's *Comus* (vv. 898-900) —

Thus I set my printless feet  
O'er the *cowslip's* velvet head,  
That bends not as I tread.

The verses,

To give the glow-worm light?  
Or, on a moonless night, . . .

may have been indebted, as the phraseology suggests, to Drayton's *Nymphidia* —

He next upon a *Glow-worm light*,  
You must suppose it now was *night*. . . .

The Indian maid, after addressing Sorrow, related her Bacchanalian experiences.

#### *Stanza 1*

Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,  
I sat a weeping: in the whole world wide  
There was no one to ask me why I wept, —  
And so I kept  
Brimming the water-lily cups with tears  
Cold as my fears.

The sources of this stanza,<sup>14</sup> together with those of the following stanzas, underwent a complete transformation in the subconscious depths of Keats's memory. They separated into their elements and entered into new combinations. The Indian maid, we have seen,

<sup>14</sup> I have divided the Triumphal March of Bacchus into stanzas for the sake of clarity in the discussion.



represents a fusion of the Indian maid who was deserted by Alexander and Ariadne, who was abandoned by Theseus. The main outline of the situation, described in the stanza above, was derived from the eighth book of Sandys's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*:

*Aegides* [Theseus], with rapt *Ariadne*, makes  
For *Dia*: on the naked shore forsakes  
His confident and sleepe-oppressed Mate.  
Now, *pining in complaints*, the desolate  
*Bacchus*, with marriage, comforts. . . .

When the Indian maid supplanted Ariadne in this situation in Keats's mind, she brought with her the scenery of her native country. The bank of the river Ganges, for instance, took the place of the shore of the isle of Dia. The Ganges was associated with Bacchus in the hymn which the Theban women sing to Bacchus at the beginning of the fourth book of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*:

Thy conquests through the Orient are renown'd,  
Where tawny *India* is by *Ganges* bound.

The "palm trees" were derived, I believe, from Booth's translation of Diodorus Siculus' *Historical Library*. Diodorus described palm trees which grew in Nysa in Arabia the Happy, the country in which Bacchus was reared by the nymphs. Many details of Bacchus' conquest of the East were drawn by Keats, we shall see, from Diodorus' story of Bacchus. The verse "Brimming the water-lily cups with tears" was derived, as De Sélincourt suggested, from Milton's *Lycidas* (v. 150):

And daffadillies fill their cups with tears . . .

#### Stanza 2

Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,  
I sat a weeping: what enamour'd bride,  
Cheated by shadowy wooer from the clouds,  
But hides and shrouds  
Beneath dark palm trees by a river side?

Keats suffused his Indian maid in an atmosphere that is weird and mysterious by having her cheated by a shadowy wooer from the clouds instead of having her deserted by a mortal lover such as Alexander or Theseus. We can trace the process, I believe, by which the sources of this incident were associated and fused in Keats's mind. Le Grand's Indian maid and Ovid's Ariadne, who wept for lovers who had abandoned them, were associated in Keats's mind with the "woman wailing for her demon lover" in Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* —

A savage place! as holy and enchanted  
 As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted  
 By woman wailing for her demon-lover!

Coleridge's "demon lover" was associated by a similar process in Keats's mind with the mediaeval Arthurian story of the demon who cheated a British maid and begot Merlin. These elements, remaining fused together in Keats's mind, appeared in the nineteenth stanza of *The Eve of St. Agnes*.

Never on such a night have lovers met,  
 Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous debt.

"Merlin's monstrous debt," H. B. Forman explained, "was his monstrous existence, which he owed to a demon and repaid when he died or disappeared through the working of one of his own spells by Viviane."

The style of the Song of the Indian Maid, as this stanza shows, owes as much to Coleridge's magical romance as the style of the Hymn to Pan owes to Wordsworth's meditative naturalism. In November 1817, when Keats was composing the Song of the Indian Maid, he borrowed a copy of Coleridge's *Sibylline Leaves* from Charles Wentworth Dilke. To this reading of Coleridge's poems, I believe, we can trace the beginning of the magical quality (as Matthew Arnold called it) in Keats's poetry.

### Stanza 3

And as I sat, over the light blue hills  
 There came a noise of revellers: the rills  
 Into the wide stream came of purple hue —  
 'Twas Bacchus and his crew!

Some of the elements of these verses were derived from Ovid's story of Pentheus, the Theban who was slain by his mother in a Bacchanalian orgy.

The time shall come (which I presage is neere)  
 When *Semeleian Liber* will be here:  
 Whom if thou honour not with Temples due;  
 Thy Mother, and her sisters shall imbrue  
 Their furious hands in thy effused blood . . .

*Liber is come; the fields with clamor sound:*  
 They in his Orgies tread a frantick round . . .

With that, *in-rush* the sense-distracted *Crew*.

[Sandys's *Ovid*, Book III.]

Other elements were derived from Milton's allusion to the Bacchanalian revellers who slew Orpheus.

But drive far off *the barbarous dissonance*  
Of Bacchus and his revellers, the race  
Of that wild rout that tore the Thracian Bard  
In Rhodope. . . .

[*Paradise Lost*, VII. 32-35.]

The element of frenzied murder in the stories of Ovid and Milton were dissipated in Keats's mind; and two of Ovid's verses, "Liber is come; the fields with clamor sound" and "With that, in-rush the sense-distracted Crew," were fused with Milton's "the barbarous dissonance Of Bacchus and his revellers."

Another element, the rills of the river turning into purple wine, may have been derived from several of Keats's sources. Wherever Bacchus appeared, the sources agree, ivy twined itself around the trees, grape vines sprang up, and streams of wine gushed forth. In Chapman's translation of the Homeric hymn, *Bacchus or the Pirates*, the identity of the god is made manifest by "strange works"—

First sweet wine through the swift-black bark did flow,  
Of which the odors did a little blow. . . .

Sandys, commenting upon the third book of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, translated a Theban hymn to Bacchus from Seneca's *Oedipus*, in which, when Bacchus discovered Ariadne sleeping on the shore of Naxos,

Torrents of wine from barren rocks descend. . . .

Another element, the beautiful image of the "light blue hills," has not been traced to its source. At this time, as Miss Lowell observed, Keats had not seen hills which would give him this impression.

In the second section of the third stanza, the Indian maid said:

The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills  
From kissing cymbals made a merry din —  
'Twas Bacchus and his kin!

A bacchante with a pair of *cymbals* stands near the foreground in Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*. Lempriere, in his *Classical Dictionary*, said

[Bacchus] marched, at the head of an army composed of men, as well as women, all inspired with divine fury, and armed with thyrsuses, *cymbals*, and other musical instruments . . . they carried thyrsi, drums, pipes, flutes. . . .

In the fourth book of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, the Theban women, singing a hymn to Bacchus, say:

What place so-e're thou entrest, sounding brasse,  
Lowd Sack-buts, Tymbrels, the confused cryes  
Of Youths and Women, pierce the marble skyes.

In the third book Pentheus, exhorting the Thebans to destroy the Bacchanalian orgies, cries:

Is Brasse of such a powre, which drunkards beat,  
Or sound of Hornes or Magicall deceit;  
That you, whom *Trumpets clangor*, horrid fight,  
Nor death, with all his terrors, could affright,  
Lowd Women, wine-bred rage, a lustfull crew  
Of Beasts, and Kettle-drums, should thus subdew. . . .

Diodorus, relating the Indian traditions of Bacchus, said:

They report that he had a regiment of women in his army, and that in the heat of battle he made use of timbrels and *cymbals*, the *trumpet* being not at that time found out. . . . [Book II, Chapter III.]

When Keats composed the Song of the Indian Maid, only the trumpet and the cymbals of all the musical instruments which he had read about in the stories of Bacchus remained in the reservoir of his memory.

The Indian maid compared the rout of Bacchus to a "moving vintage":

Like to a moving vintage down they came,  
Crown'd with green leaves, and faces all on flame;  
All madly dancing through the pleasant valley,  
To scare thee, Melancholy!

In all of Keats's sources, Bacchus and his followers are described as adorned with vine and ivy leaves. The word "vintage" occurs in Lempriere's description of Bacchus:

As he was the god of *vintage*, of wine, and of drinkers, he is generally represented *crowned with vine and ivy leaves*, with a thyrsus in his hand.

The metaphor of the "moving vintage" was derived, I believe, from *Macbeth* (V.v. 32 *et seq.*), in which the army of Malcolm, fulfilling the prophecy of the witches, gather branches from Birnam Wood and bear them before them, so that they seemed, as a messenger told Macbeth, to be "a *moving grove*." Ernest de Sélincourt suggested that the phrase "faces all on flame" was derived from verse 172 of Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* —

The western wave was all *a-flame*. . . .

I believe that the phrase was derived, however, from Rabelais' description of a picture of the battle which Bacchus won against the Indians. Pan, the leader of the rear guard of the army of Bacchus, Rabelais said, had a "*visage . . . rouge & enflammé.*" The epithet which was applied to Pan was extended in Keats's mind to all of the followers of Bacchus.

The Indian maid, forgetting Sorrow, joined the rout of Bacchus.

O then, O then, thou wast a simple name!  
And I forgot thee, as the berried holly  
By shepherds is forgotten, when, in June,  
Tall chestnuts keep away the sun and moon: —  
I rush'd into the folly!

The idea that Bacchus, the god of wine, draws persons away from sorrow is in all of Keats's sources. Bacchus is called "Liber," Sandys explained, "in that wine dischargeth the heart from sorrow." The "pleasant valley" through which the followers of Bacchus dance madly and the "tall chestnuts" which "keep away the sun and moon" were derived, I believe, from Diodorus' description of Nysa in Arabia the Happy in which Bacchus was reared (Book III, Chapter IV).

The land there is very rich, abounding with *pleasant* meadows, gardens, and orchards. . . . The first entrance into the island runs up a long *vale*, shaded all along with high and lofty trees, so thick, that only a dim and glimmering light passes through; but the fiery beams of the sun enter not in the least to offend the passenger. . . .

#### Stanza 4

The elements of the remaining stanzas, which describe the triumphal march of the army of Bacchus through the eastern countries, were derived for the most part from Diodorus and Rabelais. Diodorus, in his *Historical Library*, gathered all of the traditions of Bacchus which prevailed among the Mediterranean peoples. In Book I, Chapters I and II, he related the history of Osiris, the Egyptian Bacchus; in Book II, Chapter III, the history of the Indian Bacchus; in Book III, Chapter IV, the history of the Libyan (or African) Bacchus, the son of Ammon and Amalthaea; and in Book III, Chapter IV, and Book IV, Chapter I, the history of the Theban (or Greek) Bacchus, the son of Jupiter and Semele. Rabelais, in his fifth book, related the voyage of Pantagruel to the Island of the Bottle. In the Temple of the Bottle, which was under the ground, Pantagruel saw a mural mosaic which represented the battle which the good Bacchus won against the Indians. Keats possessed and read a copy of Rabelais' works in the original French.

Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,  
 Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,  
     With sidelong laughing;  
 And little rills of crimson wine imbrued  
 His plump white arms, and shoulders, enough white  
     For Venus' pearly bite:  
 And near him rode Silenus on his ass,  
 Pelted with flowers as he on did pass  
     Tipsily quaffing.

The elements of this stanza occur in all of Keats's sources; but, as the phraseology indicates, they were derived from Rabelais, Diodorus, Marlowe, Lempriere, and Sandys's *Ovid*. Rabelais described the young Bacchus in his triumphal car as follows:

Consequemment estoit en la susdite emblematüre, figuré, comment *Bacchus* marchoit en bataille, & estoit *sur un char magnifique*, tiré par trois couples de jeunes pards, joints ensemble: sa face estoit *comme d'un jeune enfant*, pour enseignement que tous bons beuveurs jamais n'envieillissent, rouge comme un cherubin, sans un poil de barbe au manton. . . .

And later in the description Rabelais added:

& le bon homme *Bacchus sur son char* se pourmener en seureté parmy le camp, *riant*, se gaudissant & beuvant *d'autant à un chascun*.

Rabelais' "Bacchus sur son char . . . riant . . . d'autant à un chascun" became Keats's "Within his car . . . Bacchus stood . . . With sidelong laughing."

The "ivy-dart" which Bacchus "trifles" was derived from Diodorus (Book III, Chapter IV).

For instead of the lances, he ordered his Bacchantes to carry *darts wrapt round with ivy at the points*, with which (on a sudden and unexpectedly) they assaulted and wounded to death the kings that were ignorant of the stratagem. . . .

Tooke, in his *Pantheon*, said that the thyrsus which Bacchus bore was "a javelin with an iron head, encircled by ivy or vine leaues." And Sandys, commenting upon the fourth book of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, said that "Each [Bacchante] held a Thyrsis in her hand (a Iauelin wreathed about with Ivy) to take away terror from their friends, and covertly to wound their enimies. . . ."

The youth and beauty of Bacchus is praised in all of Keats's sources. Ovid, in his third book, described Bacchus as a "louely Boy," "Adorned with the beauty of a Maid." Spence, in his *Polymetis*, said that Bacchus had "a face as young and perhaps more beautiful and effeminate than ever man had." And Rabelais, as we have seen, said that the face of Bacchus was "comme d'un jeune enfant." The verses,

His plump white arms, and shoulders, enough white  
For Venus' pearly bite:

were a reminiscence of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (First Sestiad, vv. 63-65):

Euen as delicious meat is to the tast,  
So was his necke in touching, and surpast  
The white of Pelops shoulder. . . .

The verses,

And near him rode Silenus on his ass,  
Pelted with flowers as he on did pass  
Tipsily quaffing

are an imaginative transmutation of Lempriere's description of Silenus:

Silenus is generally represented as a fat and jolly old man, riding on an ass, crowned with flowers, and always intoxicated.

Ovid, in his fourth book, said:

Light *Bacchides*, and skipping Satyrs follow,  
Whil'st old *Sylenus*, reeling still, doth hallow;  
Who weakly hangs, upon his tardie Asse.

Rabelais described "une danse de femmes & Satyres, accompagnans le vieil Silenus, riant sus son Asne." Tooke said that "Silenus oftentimes comes after him [Bacchus] sitting on an ass that bends under his burden." "He was Bacchus' foster father," Tooke added later, and "consequently almost always drunk."

### Stanza 5

Whence came ye, merry Damsels! whence came ye!  
So many, and so many, and such glee?  
Why have ye left your bowers desolate,  
Your lutes, and gentler fate? —  
"We follow Bacchus! Bacchus on the wing,  
A conquering!  
Bacchus, young Bacchus! good or ill betide,  
We dance before him thorough kingdoms wide: —  
Come hither, lady fair, and joined be  
To our wild minstrelsy!"

Keats's "merry Damsels" differ entirely in character from the drunken, frenzied, and murderous women whom Ovid, Sandys, Rabelais, Lempriere, Tooke, and others described as the followers of Bacchus. Keats derived the pleasing character of his "merry

Damsels" from Diodorus, who venerated Bacchus as the most ancient and the most beneficent of the gods.

Afterwards he [Bacchus] got together an army of women armed with lances, and adorned with garlands of flowers, and marched with them through all parts of the world, teaching men his mysterious rites and ceremonies, yet imparting them only to those that lived virtuously and piously. [Book III, Chapter IV.]

They say, Diodorus reported later, that

the muses attended him in his expedition, virgins excellently learned, who by their melodious singing, dancing, and other pleasant diversions, exceedingly delighted the god. [Book IV, Chapter I]

The idea that the damsels leave their "bowers desolate," their "lutes and gentler fate," may have been suggested by Ovid's description of a Bacchanalian Feast (Book IV). When the Priest of Bacchus "proclaimes a solemne Feast," the "Dames and Maids from usuall labour rest" and "Their Webs, their un-spun Wooll, aside they lay." The great number of the damsels ("So many, and so many") may have been suggested by Diodorus' statement that Bacchus "carry'd about with him *multitudes of Women* in his army" (Book IV, Chapter I) and by Rabelais' quaint estimate that these women were seventy and nine thousand two hundred twenty-seven ("Le nombre d'icelles estoit septante & neuf mille deux cens vingt sept").

### Stanza 6

Whence came ye, jolly Satyrs! whence came ye!  
 So many, and so many, and such glee?  
 Why have ye left your forest haunts, why left  
     Your nuts in oak-tree cleft? —  
 "For wine, for wine we left our kernel tree;  
 For wine we left our heath, and yellow brooms,  
     And cold mushrooms;  
 For wine we follow Bacchus through the earth;  
 Great God of breathless cups and chirping mirth! —  
 Come hither, lady fair, and joined be  
     To our mad minstrelsy!"

The pleasant character of the "jolly Satyrs" (their "glee," and their "mad minstrelsy") was derived from Diodorus.

They say likewise [Diodorus reported] that he [Bacchus] carry'd Satyrs along with him, who by their dancing and skipping in his Sports and Plays made the God exceedingly merry. To conclude, as the muses pleas'd and delighted him with the knowledge of the liberal Sciences, so the satyrs with their tricks and antic and ridiculous Gestures and Actions compleated the Happiness and Comfort of his Life. [Book IV, Chapter I.]



In his history of Osiris, the Egyptian Bacchus, Diodorus said:

As he pass'd through Ethiopia, a company of Satyrs were presented to him, who (as it is reported) were all Hairy down to the loynes. For Osiris was a man given to Mirth and Jollity, and took great pleasure in Music and Dancing. . . . Upon this account the Satyrs, who are naturally inclined to skipping, dancing, and singing, and all sorts of mirth were taken as part of the Army. [Book I, Chapter II.]

The great number of the satyrs, as that of the damsels, may have been suggested by Rabelais' estimate. Describing the vanguard of the army, which was led by Silenus, Rabelais said:

Sa compagnie estoit de jeunes gens champestres, cornus comme cheureaux, & cruels comme Lions, tous nuds, tousiours chantans & dansans les cordaces; on les appelloit Tityres & Satyres. Le nombre estoit octante cinq mille six vingts & treize.

The idea that the forest, especially the oak-tree, was the native haunt of the satyrs was derived from Tooke's *Pantheon*.

Those are satyrs [Tooke observed] who dance in lascivious motions under the shade of that tall and spreading oak.

### Stanza 7

Over wide streams and mountains great we went,  
And, save when Bacchus kept his ivy tent,  
Onward the tiger and the leopard pants,

With Asian elephants:

Onward these myriads — with song and dance,  
With zebras striped, and sleek Arabians' prance,  
Web-footed alligators, crocodiles,  
Bearing upon their scaly backs, in files,  
Plump infant laughers mimicking the coil  
Of seamen, and stout galley-rowers' toil:

With toying oars and silken sails they glide,  
Nor care for wind and tide.

The tiger, the leopard, and the Asian elephants which pant onward — that is, I presume, which draw the chariot of Bacchus — were fused together from several sources. Lempriere said that "The leader [Bacchus] was drawn in a chariot by a *lion* and a *tiger* . . ."; and Tooke said that "He is carried in a chariot which is sometimes drawn by *tigers* and *lions*, and sometimes by *lynxes* and *panthers*." Rabelais, describing the battle in which Bacchus overcame the Indians, said that Bacchus "estoit sur un char magnifique, tiré par trois couples de jeunes *pards*, joints ensemble"; and later, describing the triumphal march of Bacchus, he said that Bacchus' car

"estoit . . . tyré par *Elephants* joints ensemble." Diodorus, relating the return of Bacchus into Greece, said:

After he had spent three whole years in an expedition into India, he returned with many rich spoils into Boeotia, and was the first in triumph *mounted upon an Indian elephant*.

The tiger came from Lempriere and Tooke, the elephants from Rabelais and Diodorus, and the leopard from Rabelais. The leopard appeared afterwards in the *Ode to a Nightingale* —

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,  
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,  
But on the viewless wings of Poesy. . . .

The employment of "pards," the French form of the word, indicates Keats's indebtedness to Rabelais.

I have not discovered a definite source for the striped zebras and the sleek Arabian steeds; they were suggested, I presume, by Bacchus' conquest of the African countries, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Arabia, of which Diodorus gave the fullest account.

Crocodiles appear in Diodorus' history of Egypt (Book I, Chapter VII) and in Rabelais' description of Bacchus' invasion of Egypt: "Au bout estoit descript le pays d'Egipte avec le Nil & ses *Crocodilles*. . . ." The "plump infant laughers" who ride upon the backs of the crocodiles were derived, Sir Sidney Colvin suggested, from the plinth of the ancient recumbent statue of the Nile. In this statuary a host of infant boys, symbolizing fertility, clamber over the recumbent figure of a man who represents the Nile. Several of the boys play with crocodiles and one boy, near the feet of the figure of the man, rides upon the back of a crocodile. Keats saw a print of this group, it is probable, in the painting-room of Benjamin Robert Haydon, with whom we know he studied prints and sketches of other statues and paintings.

The "plump infant laughers" pretend that the crocodiles upon which they ride are boats, and they mimic "the coil Of seamen, and stout galley-rowers' toil." The source of this detail is obscure. The "pigmy rowers," Sir Sidney Colvin suggested, were drawn "from certain reliefs which Keats . . . noticed in the Townley collection at the British Museum." It is possible, although it may seem far-fetched, that Keats meant that the infant rowers were enacting the "coil" of the Tuscan seamen who captured a young man and discovered to their sorrow that their captive was Bacchus. Keats knew this exploit of Bacchus in Chapman's translation of the Homeric hymn *Bacchus or the Pirates* and in Sandys's translation of

the third book of Ovid's *Metamorphosis* and Seneca's Theban Hymn to Bacchus. As the Tuscan rovers were sailing away with Bacchus, the blue seas became flowery meads and grape and ivy vines sprang up around the ship and twined about the masts. The sailors, Ovid said, divide the waves "with laborious Oares."

The ship in those profound  
And spacefull Seas, so stuck as on drie ground.  
They, wondering, ply'd their Oares; the sayls display'd,  
And strue to run her with that added aide.  
When Iuy gaue their Oares a forc't restraint;  
Whose creeping bands the sayles with Berryes paint.

Tigers, lynxes, and panthers appeared on the deck; and the sailors, casting themselves into the sea, were transformed into dolphins.

In the final detail of the stanza the "infant laughers" pretend to glide along "with toying oars and silken sails." The verse, "Nor care for wind and tide," was a reminiscence, Ernest de Sélincourt suggested, of a verse in Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

Withouten wind, withouten tide.

### Stanza 8

Mounted on panthers' furs and lions' manes,  
From rear to van they scour about the plains;  
A three days' journey in a moment done:  
And always, at the rising of the sun,  
About the wilds they hunt with spear and horn,  
On spleenful unicorn.

Panthers and lions, as we have observed, were among the beasts which attended Bacchus and drew his car. "Mounted on panthers' furs" has a parallel in Sandys's translation of Seneca's Theban Hymn to Bacchus.

Whose loynes a Panthers sacred skin invests.

In Keats's sources, the "unicorn" does not occur, so far as I can discover, among the beasts which accompany the Bacchic rout. The idea of the unicorn as an animal for riding in the chase may have been suggested to Keats by Chapman's *Hymnus ad Cynthiam* —

The huntsmen . . .  
                    in eager chase drew near,  
Mounted on lions, unicorns, and boars. . . .

*Stanza 9*

I saw Osirian Egypt kneel adown  
     Before the vine-wreath crown!  
 I saw parch'd Abyssinia rouse and sing  
     To the silver cymbals' ring!  
 I saw the whelming vintage hotly pierce  
     Old Tartary the fierce!  
 The kings of Inde their jewel-sceptres vail,  
 And from their treasures scatter pearled hail;  
 Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans,  
     And all his priesthood moans;  
 Before young Bacchus' eye-wink turning pale. —  
 Into these regions came I following him,  
 Sick hearted, weary — so I took a whim  
 To stray away into these forests drear  
     Alone, without a peer:  
 And I have told thee all thou mayest hear.

Keats derived from Diodorus the story of Bacchus' conquests of Egypt, Ethiopia, India, and other countries. He converted Ethiopia into Abyssinia, recalling perhaps the "Abyssinian maid" in Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, and he introduced "Old Tartary the fierce" from some source which was not connected with the history of Bacchus. The verb "pierce" ("I saw the whelming vintage hotly pierce Old Tartary the fierce!") may have been a reminiscence of a passage in Diodorus' history of Sesostris, the great king of Egypt, who conquered many countries.

For he both passed over the river Ganges, and likewise *pierced* through all India to the main ocean. [Book I, Chapter IV.]

Keats derived from Diodorus also the ease and rapidity with which Bacchus conquered the eastern countries. After Bacchus had conquered Egypt, Diodorus said, he passed through the whole world, planting and improving all countries.

His fame was now so nois'd abroad in every place, that none durst oppose him, but all submitted of their own accord, and with praises and sacrifices adored him as a god. [Book III, Chapter IV.]

The treasures which the Indian kings scatter before Bacchus may have been suggested by Rabelais' description of the triumph of Bacchus:

Es costez du char estoient les Roys Indiens, prins & liez à grosses chaines d'or: toute la brigade marchoit avec pompes divines en joye & liesse indicible, portant infinis trophées, fercules & despoilles des ennemis, en joyeux Epinicies, & petites chansons villatiques & dithyrambes resonans.

The employment of "vail" ("The kings of Inde their jewel-sceptres vail") may have been suggested by a verse in Shakespeare's *Pericles* (II. iii. 42) —

Did vail their crowns to his supremacy. . . .

The idea that "Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans, And all his priesthood moans; Before young Bacchus' eye-wink turning pale" was derived from Milton's ode *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, in which, on the morning that Christ is born, the pagan gods, who are fallen angels, lose their power, grow pale, groan, and fade away to Hell. For instance,

The Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets *mourn* . . .

The Lars and Lemurs *moan* with midnight plaint. . . .

The verse "To the silver cymbals' ring" is another reminiscence, as Ernest de Sélincourt suggested, of Milton's ode —

In vain with cymbals' ring.

### 3. THE THEME OF *Endymion*: THE QUEST OF IDEAL BEAUTY

Keats derived the theme of *Endymion* chiefly from the mystical Platonism of his Renaissance masters, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Drayton, and, to a less extent, from the naturalistic Platonism of his contemporaries, Wordsworth and Shelley.

Keats formed his conception of Greek culture from the rich classical allusions, translations, adaptations, and imitations in the poetry of Spenser, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Chapman, Drayton, Fletcher, Browne, Milton, and Sandys. From these Renaissance interpretations of classical culture, which, although they lack classical restraint and symmetry, are sensuous, imaginative, and joyous, Keats conceived of the Greek spirit as the principle of beauty in all things.

Keats [Joseph Severn said] made me in love with the real living Spirit of the past. He was the first to point out to me how essentially modern that Spirit is: "It's an immortal youth," he would say, "just as there is no *Now* or *Then* for the Holy Ghost."<sup>15</sup>

Rome [Severn said again], the real Rome would never have become a joy to me — not, at any rate, for a very long time, and even then with difficulty and at best obscurely — had it not been for Keats's talks with me about the Greek spirit, — the Religion of the Beautiful, the Religion of Joy, as he used to call it. . . . "I never cease to wonder at all that incarnate Delight," Keats remarked to me once. . . .<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> William Sharp, *Life and Letters of Joseph Severn*, p. 29.

Keats cherished this principle of beauty long after he had outgrown the Platonic form in which he expressed it in *Endymion*. It was the one abiding element in his poetic creed. A few months before he died he wrote his fiancée, Miss Brawne:

"If I should die," said I to myself, "I have left no immortal work behind me — nothing to make my friends proud of my memory — but I have lov'd the principle of beauty in all things, and if I had had time I would have made myself remember'd"

The neo-Platonic philosophy of beauty was the basic philosophy of the erotic literature of the Renaissance. An early and simple form of this philosophy was made famous by Petrarch's sonnets to Laura, which were translated and imitated by poets throughout Western Europe. The complete system of neo-Platonism was developed and perfected by Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico, Conte della Mirandola, the chief philosophers of the Platonic Academy of Florence. Under the patronage of Lorenzo de' Medici, Ficino devoted his whole life to the translation and the interpretation of Plato's Dialogues. Following Giorgios Gemisthos Plethon, whose lectures on Plato at Florence in 1453 inspired the establishment of the Academy, Ficino interpreted Plato in the light of the neo-Platonism of Plotinus, Jamblicus, Proclus, Prophyry, and other philosophers of the Alexandrine period of Greek culture. Ficino translated also the whole of Plotinus and selections of the other neo-Platonists. The Florentine Academy did not revive pure Platonism; it received, developed, and transmitted the living, growing tradition of Platonism. The Platonism of the Renaissance, therefore, like that of the Alexandrine period, is called neo-Platonism.

This neo-Platonic philosophy of beauty appeared in English literature for the first time in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*. The theme of this metrical romance, the conflict of love and friendship, is neo-Platonic rather than chivalric; and at the end of the romance (vv. 2987 *et seq.*) there is an explanation of the neo-Platonic "chain of love." Neo-Platonism appeared in English literature for the second time in Sir Thomas Hoby's translation of Baldassare Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*. Coming into England as a chief element of Renaissance poetry, it permeated English verse of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The chief sources from which Keats learned his neo-Platonic principles were Spenser's *Four Hymnes* and *Faerie Queene*; Shakespeare's sonnets, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*; and Drayton's *Seventh Eclogue* and *Endymion and Phoebe*.

The essence of neo-Platonism was a belief in a principle of unity which transcends the eternal flux of the material world. To the

naturalist, who finds in sense-impressions the only source of a knowledge of the universe in which he lives, there is nothing permanent, nothing absolute, in the world. Since pure scepticism is the rarest thing in the world, however,—since men are prone by nature to worship gods of some sort or other,—the naturalist makes his obeisance to the Goddess Mutability, or to her modern successor, the Goddess Evolution. Anatole France, a leader of modern naturalism, said: “We are fated to know things only by the impression which they make on us. . . . I have more than once glanced sidewise at absolute scepticism; but I have never entered that region. . . . I have believed at least in the relativity of things and in the succession of phenomena.” This naturalistic philosophy, as old at least as Heraclitus, has been throughout the ages the foe of man’s innate faith in some divine principle that transcends the relativity of matter. Spenser, who saw the danger in a blind worship of the Goddess Mutability, said:

What man that sees the ever-whirling wheele  
Of Change, the which all mortall things doth sway,  
But that therby doth find, and plainly feele,  
How Mutability in them doth play  
Her cruell sports, to many mens decay?  
Which that to all may better yet appeare,  
I will rehearse that whylome I heard say,  
How she at first her selfe began to reare  
Gainst all the gods, and th’ empire sought from them to beare.

Keats, like Spenser, was intensely conscious of the eternal flux of life. In *Sleep and Poetry*, which he composed in December 1816, he said, as we have already observed: “Stop and consider! Life is but a day; A fragile dew-drop on its perilous way From a tree’s summit. . . .” In his youthful zest for experience, however, he saw no cause for sadness in the evanescence of life. “Why so sad a moan?” he asked. “Life is the rose’s hope while yet unblown; The reading of an ever-changing tale. . . .” In *Endymion*, after he had seen the ravages of the “ever-whirling wheel Of Change,” he took refuge in the neo-Platonic solution of the problem of beauty and decay. In later poems, after he had rejected neo-Platonism, he expressed a deep melancholy at the mutability of beauty.

The neo-Platonists, finding no tranquillity of soul in this mutable world of matter, founded their philosophy upon a denial of the reality of matter and an affirmation of the reality of spirit. The negative side of neo-Platonism, its denial of the reality of matter, is expressed perfectly by Shakespeare in *The Tempest*. When Prospero

had dismissed the pageant of spirits which he had conjured up for the amusement of Ferdinand and Miranda, he expressed Plato's idea that the whole natural world is a world of sensuous illusion (IV. i. 149-58):

These our actors,  
As I foretold you, were all spirits and  
Are melted into air, into thin air:  
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,  
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve  
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep.

The positive side of neo-Platonism, its spiritual affirmation, is expressed in all of Keats's sources which I have already mentioned. It is most completely expressed perhaps in Spenser's *Four Hymnes*, whose individual titles are *An Hymne in Honour of Love*, *An Hymne in Honour of Beautie*, *An Hymne of Heavenly Love*, and *An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie*. In the two first hymns Spenser expressed neo-Platonism in pure pagan form, and in the two last hymns he expressed it in Christian form. The neo-Platonists reconciled their philosophy with Christianity by identifying the Absolute, the Original Essence, with God the Father; the World-Mind (*νοῦς*) with God the Son, according to which the *νοῦς* corresponds to the God-Christ and the *λόγος* to the Man-Christ; and the World-Soul (*ψυχή*) with God the Holy Ghost.

Ideal beauty, the neo-Platonists said, exists in God, or Original Essence, alone; but God, contemplating his own beauty, loved it and desired to propagate it beyond itself. In a series of emanations from God came the World-Mind, the World-Soul, the World-Matter, and the various elements, plants, and animals which are a part of the material world. Each order of emanation possesses a reflection of ideal beauty in proportion to its propinquity to the Godhead. Beauty, therefore, is the chain that links together the various orders of emanation from the highest forms of spirit to the lowest forms of matter. Love, which is the desire of the generation of beauty, was implanted in the universe in its emanation (or creation), for God started the process of emanation because of his desire to extend his own beauty. In the lower orders — in animals, for instance — love is manifested as the instinct of procreation; but in man, who possesses more of heavenly spirit, it is not only the instinct of procrea-



tion, or the desire for the propagation of the beauty of the body, but it is also the desire for the perpetuation of the beauty of the mind, as in artistic creation, and in its highest form it is the desire for the reunion of the soul with God. In its essence, therefore, love is the desire for immortality. Although earthly beauty is only an imperfect reflection of ideal beauty, man may rise from a love of beauty in material things to a love of ideal beauty and from a love of the beauty of a particular person to a love of the beauty of God. This neo-Platonic quest, the quest of the soul of man for reunion with God, or Original Essence, is attained in death, at which the soul, released from the body, returns to God from which it came. It may also be attained temporarily by man during his earthly existence by means of an ecstasy, or state of prophetic vision, in which his sensuous perception of the ever-changing world of matter dissolves away, in which his soul puts off its garment of flesh and stands naked in the presence of the beauty of God.

Keats's interest in philosophy was awakened, I believe, by the philosophical discussions which Shelley introduced into Hunt's coterie in December 1816. Horace Smith, who met Shelley in Hunt's cottage in December, said that Shelley's "principal discourse . . . was of Plato, for whose character, writings, and philosophy he expressed an unbounded admiration." In March 1816, nine months before he entered Hunt's circle, Shelley published *Alastor*, the theme of which is the Platonic quest of ideal, or intellectual, beauty. And on January 19, 1817, a month after he entered the coterie, he published his *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* in *The Examiner*. He derived his Platonism directly from Plato, whose Dialogues he read in the original Greek, but he fused it with contemporary (or Rousseauistic) naturalism. He derived this fusion in part from Wordsworth, who reared a structure of mysticism upon a foundation of empiricism. His *Alastor*, for instance, is replete with echoes of Wordsworth's *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*.

The mysticism of Wordsworth and Shelley differed essentially from the older mysticism which had prevailed from earliest times down through the seventeenth century. The older mystics, both Platonic and Christian, attained unto a state of ecstasy or spiritual vision by a discipline of fasting and contemplation. By repressing their physical sensations, they believed, they liberated their souls from the dominance of their bodies, strengthened and purified them, and made them fit mediums for divine illumination. Wordsworth, on the contrary, attained unto a state of ecstasy by means of physical sensations. He would gaze at a beautiful landscape and receive

sensations of beauty, and these sensations, stimulating his emotions, would lead him into a state of spiritual vision. To the "beauteous forms" of nature, which gave him "sensations sweet," he said in *Tintern Abbey*, he owed

that serene and blessed mood,  
In which the affections gently lead us on, —  
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul:  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things.

The neo-Platonic lover, who ascended from the love of the beauty of a particular person to the love of the beauty of God, escaped as soon as possible from the personal, material beauty which was his initial inspiration. In the "stair of love," which (according to Castiglione and Benivieni) consisted of six steps, the lover abandoned his mistress at the end of the second step. Shelley, on the contrary, could not escape from the sway of physical beauty. In *Alastor* (v. 149-191) he confused a nympholeptic dream with a Platonic vision, and he arose from his dream with the jaded feelings of a man who has undergone a sensual debauch.

(Keats, influenced by Wordsworth and Shelley, fused his neo-Platonism with naturalism.) Like Wordsworth, he based the neo-Platonic ecstasy upon physical sensations and, like Shelley, confused a nympholeptic dream with a vision of ideal beauty. His nympholeptic dream in *Endymion* (II. vv. 709-873) is a crude imitation of that in *Alastor*. His mind was clear and wholesome, however, and he perceived the confusion into which he had been led. In 1819, long after he had abandoned neo-Platonism, he made the following annotation in his copy of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* on the section entitled *Loves Beginning, Object, Definition, Division*:

Here is the old plague spot; the pestilence, the raw scrofula. I mean that there is nothing disgraces me in my own eyes so much as being one of a race of eyes nose and mouth beings in a planet call'd the earth who all from Plato to Wesley have always mingled goatish winnyish lustful love with the abstract adoration of the deity. I don't understand Greek — is the love of God and the Love of women express'd by the same word in Greek? I hope my little mind is wrong — if not I could — Has Plato separated these loves? Ha! I see how they endeavour to divide — but there appears to be a horrid relationship.

If Keats had read Plato's *Symposium*, he would have known of course that Plato distinguished between the Uranian Aphrodite, or

spiritual beauty, and the Pandemian Aphrodite, or physical beauty, and consequently between spiritual love and physical love. He ought to have perceived also that Spenser, Shakespeare, and the Renaissance poets made this same distinction.

In connection with Keats's indebtedness to Wordsworth, it is convenient to consider the famous principle of beauty in the opening verses of *Endymion*.

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:  
Its loveliness increases; it will never  
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep  
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep  
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.  
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing  
A flowery band to bind us to the earth,  
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth  
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,  
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways  
Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,  
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall  
From our dark spirits.

This principle of the comforting power of beautiful objects has no essential part in the development of the neo-Platonic theme of *Endymion*. It is a fundamental principle, however, of Wordsworth's philosophy of nature, from which Keats derived it. Revisiting Tintern Abbey after an absence of five years, Wordsworth said:

These beauteous forms,  
Through a long absence, have not been to me  
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:  
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;  
And passing even into my purer mind,  
With tranquil restoration. . . .

Keats derived the stages through which he developed the theme of *Endymion* from the neo-Platonic poets of the Renaissance, although he interpreted some of his neo-Platonic principles in the light of the naturalism of Wordsworth and Shelley. In a long passage in the first book (vv. 777 *et seq.*), in which he explained the theme of the poem, he stated explicitly the neo-Platonic philosophy of beauty.

Wherein lies happiness? In that which becks  
Our ready minds to fellowship divine,  
A fellowship with essence; till we shine,

Full alchemiz'd, and free of space. Behold  
 The clear religion of heaven! Fold  
 A rose leaf round thy finger's taperness,  
 And soothe thy lips hist, when the airy stress  
 Of music's kiss impregnates the free winds,  
 And with a sympathetic touch unbinds  
 Aeolian magic from their lucid wombs:  
 Then old songs waken from enclouded tombs;  
 Old ditties sigh above their father's grave;  
 Ghosts of melodious prophecyings rave  
 Round every spot where trod Apollo's foot;  
 Bronze clarions awake, and faintly bruit,  
 Where long ago a giant battle was;  
 And, from the turf, a lullaby doth pass  
 In every place where infant Orpheus slept.  
 Feel we these things? — that moment have we stept  
 Into a sort of oneness, and our state  
 Is like a floating spirit's. But there are  
 Richer entanglements, enthrallments far  
 More self-destroying, leading, by degrees,  
 To the chief intensity. the crown of these  
 Is made of love and friendship, and sits high  
 Upon the forehead of humanity.  
 All its more ponderous and bulky worth  
 Is friendship, whence there ever issues forth  
 A steady splendour; but at the tip-top,  
 There hangs by unseen film, an orb'd drop  
 Of light, and that is love. . . .

While *Endymion* was going through the press, Keats revised this passage and added the four first verses in which he stated the neo-Platonic quest of "fellowship with essence," for he realized on second thought that an explicit statement of his theme was necessary. In the letter to his publisher, John Taylor, in which he authorized the revision, he said:

You must indulge me by putting this in for setting aside the badness of the other, such a preface is necessary to the subject. The whole thing must I think have appeared to you, who are a consecutive Man, as a thing almost of mere words — but I assure you that when I wrote it it was a regular stepping of the Imagination towards a Truth. My having written that Argument will perhaps be of the greatest Service to me of any thing I ever did. It set before me at once the gradations of Happiness even like a kind of Pleasure Thermometer — and is my first step towards the chief attempt in the Drama — the playing of different Natures with Joy and Sorrow.

If we interpret *Endymion* in the light of this passage, as Keats intended us to do, we see that the theme of the poem is the neo-Platonic quest of immortality. Keats outlined four stages or grada-

tions through which Endymion must pass before he wins the happiness of "fellowship with essence"—first, appreciation of the beauty of nature, "the clear religion of heaven"; second, appreciation of the beauty of art; third, friendship; and fourth, love. He developed these four stages in the four books of *Endymion*, devoting a book to each stage.

Keats derived these four stages individually from Spenser, Shakespeare, and other neo-Platonic poets of the Renaissance. He was quite orthodox in placing the beauty of art above the beauty of nature. All men desire immortality, Plato said in the *Symposium*. Some men strive to attain immortality by begetting offspring—that is, by perpetuating the beauty of their bodies; but others who are nobler strive to attain immortality by creating works of art. "Who, when he thinks of Homer and Hesiod and other great poets," Plato said, "would not rather have their children than ordinary human ones?" And Shakespeare, implying that the beauty of art is more permanent than the beauty of the body, boasted that he would preserve the beauty of his fair friend in his "powerful rhyme." Keats was unorthodox, however, in placing love above friendship. In the fourth book of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and in Shakespeare's sonnets and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, friendship, the love of man for man, is regarded as nobler than love, the love of man for woman, because it is free from the fetters of sex. In most of the Elizabethan sonnet sequences, however, friendship is ignored and love is the sole theme.

Before analyzing the four gradations of beauty through which Endymion ascends to a fellowship with essence, let us consider the role of the imagination in Keats's philosophy of beauty. In a letter to Bailey on November 21, 1817, when he was composing the fourth book of *Endymion*, Keats said:

“O I wish I was as certain of the end of all your troubles as that of your momentary start about the authenticity of the Imagination. I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination—What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth—whether it existed before or not—for I have the same Idea of all our Passions as of Love they are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty. In a Word, you may know my favorite Speculation by my first Book and the little song I sent in my last—which is a representation from the fancy of the probable mode of operating in these Matters. The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream—he awoke and found it truth. I am the more zealous in this affair, because I have never yet been able to perceive how anything can be known for truth by consecutive reasoning—and yet it must be. Can it be that even the greatest Philosopher ever arrived at his goal without putting aside numerous objections. However it may be, O for a Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts! It is “a

Vision in the form of Youth" a Shadow of reality to come — and this consideration has further convinced me for it has come as auxiliary to another favorite Speculation of mine, that we shall enjoy ourselves hereafter by having what we called happiness on Earth repeated in a finer tone and so repeated. And yet such a fate can only befall those who delight in Sensation rather than hunger as you do after Truth. Adam's dream will do here and seems to be a conviction that Imagination and its empyreal reflection is the same as human Life and its Spiritual repetition. But as I was saying — the simple imaginative Mind may have its rewards in the repetition of its own silent Working coming continually on the Spirit with a fine Suddenness — to compare great things with small — have you never by being Surprised with an old Melody — in a delicious place — by a delicious voice, fe[l]t over again your very Speculations and Surmises at the time it first operated on your Soul — do you not remember forming to yourself the singer's face more beautiful than [than] it was possible and yet with the elevation of the Moment you did not think so — even then you were mounted on the Wings of Imagination so high — that the Prototype must be here after — that delicious face you will see What a time! I am continually running away from the subject — sure this cannot be exactly the case with a complex Mind — one that is imaginative and at the same time careful of its fruits — who would exist partly on Sensation partly on thought — to whom it is necessary that years should bring the philosophic Mind — such an one I consider yours and therefore it is necessary to your eternal Happiness that you not only drink this old Wine of Heaven, which I shall call the redigestion of our most ethereal Musings on Earth; but also increase in knowledge and know all things.

In this letter Keats explained not only the authenticity of the imagination but also the essence of his philosophy of beauty. You may know my speculation, he reminded Bailey, by the first book of *Endymion* and by the Song to Sorrow which I sent you in my last letter. The passage in the first book to which he referred is that in which he explained the theme of the poem, the passage which I have quoted above.

Underlying Keats's explanation of the authenticity of the imagination, we must remember, were his former discussions of Wordsworth's philosophy with Bailey at Oxford in September 1817. After he had been awakened by Shelley to a consciousness of philosophy, he studied Hazlitt's philosophical essays and accepted Hazlitt as his instructor in philosophy. Just as Shelley helped him to interpret the neo-Platonism of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Drayton, so Hazlitt, who was an empiricist, assisted him in interpreting Wordsworth's empiricism, especially the principles of sensation and association. In September 1817 he discussed Wordsworth's humanitarianism with Bailey; he was influenced by it in the third book of *Endymion*, but by November he rejected it.

(With the material now before us, we can interpret Keats's philosophy of beauty more exactly. We can analyze more closely also

his fusion of contemporary empiricism with the neo-Platonism of the Renaissance. He accepted, first of all, the Platonic distinction between the world of matter and the world of ideas. The material world, he believed, is an unreal, imperfect, ever-changing reproduction of the ideal world, which is real, perfect, and unchanging. Man can ascend to a fellowship with essence — that is, to a communion with the ideal world — by means of the chain of beauty which binds all things together from the highest forms of spirit to the lowest forms of matter. The gradations through which Endymion ascends to a fellowship with essence are appreciation of the beauty of nature, appreciation of the beauty of art, friendship, and love.

Keats accepted, in the second place, the empirical principle that there are no innate ideas, that there is no divine or supernatural illumination, and that sensations or sensuous impressions are the sole and primary bases of mental experience. He could have learned this principle from Shelley's conversation, Wordsworth's poems, and Hazlitt's essays. The sensations which a man receives from natural objects, he believed, produce strong passions or emotions in him and induce a state of ecstasy in which his imagination, stimulated by his passions, apprehends or intuits truth in the form of beauty. He found this mental process, as we have seen, described in Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* (vv. 35-49). "What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth — whether it existed before or not —," he said, "for I have the same Idea of all our Passions as of Love they are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty." (The Song to Sorrow in the fourth book of *Endymion*, he said, is "a representation from the fancy of the probable mode of operating in these Matters." It is an illustration of that essential beauty which the imagination, stimulated by passion, creates out of sensuous experience. The essential, or ideal, beauty which the imagination seizes is truth, for it is an attribute of God, or Original Essence. In the description of this mental process there is a complete fusion of the epistemology of empiricism and the ontology of neo-Platonism.)

"The Imagination," Keats explained, "may be compared to Adam's dream — he awoke and found it truth." If we refer to Adam's dream in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (VIII, 452 *et seq.*), Keats's meaning is manifest. When Adam complained of solitude in the Garden of Eden, God replied that he had not intended him to live alone, and he cast him into a trance, in which, said Adam,

Mine eyes he closed, but open left the cell  
Of fancy, my internal sight. . . .

In this trance, in which his body was asleep but his soul was awake, Adam saw a rib removed from his side, out of which under the forming hands of God a creature grew —

so lovely fair  
That what seemed fair in all the world seemed now  
Mean, or in her summed up, in her contained . . .

This lovely paragon faded from Adam's dream; but, when he awoke, he found her in reality such as he had seen her in his dream.

She disappeared, and left me dark; I waked  
To find her, or for ever to deplore  
Her loss, and other pleasures all abjure.  
When, out of hope, behold her not far off,  
*Such as I saw her in my dream. . . .*

"Adam's dream . . . seems to be a conviction that Imagination and its empyreal reflection is the same as human Life and its Spiritual repetition," Keats said. Therefore, he concluded, since the material world is an imperfect reproduction of the ideal world, "we shall enjoy ourselves hereafter by having what we called happiness on Earth repeated in a finer tone. . . ."

Keats adapted Adam's dream into an episode in the fourth book of *Endymion*. While Endymion and the Indian maid were traversing the air on a pair of winged steeds, who symbolize the imagination, Endymion fell asleep and had a dream in which he was in Olympus, surrounded by all the gods, and saw Phoebe, the goddess whom he adored.

Then doth he spring  
Towards her, and awakes — and, strange, o'erhead,  
Of those same fragrant exhalations bred,  
*Beheld awake his very dream:* the gods  
Stood smiling; merry Hebe laughs and nods;  
And Phoebe bends towards him crescented.

Keats believed that the imagination is the only faculty by which man can apprehend truth. He could not perceive "how anything can be known for truth by consecutive reasoning." "Can it be," he asked, "that even the greatest Philosopher ever arrived at his goal without putting aside numerous objections." Believing that sensations or sensuous impressions are the bases of the process by which the imagination apprehends truth, he exclaimed: "O for a Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts! It is 'a vision in the form of Youth' a Shadow of reality to come." Therefore he, like Wordsworth, placed the strongest emphasis upon the value of sensations.



## Book I

The action of the first book takes place in Endymion's Latmian principality. In its theme, Endymion's quest of fellowship with essence through the clear religion of heaven, Keats distinguished two stages. The first is the cult of natural beauty in general:

Behold  
The clear religion of heaven! Fold  
A rose leaf round thy finger's taperness,  
And soothe thy lips: hush, when the airy stress  
Of music's kiss impregnates the free winds,  
And with a sympathetic touch unbinds  
Aeolian magic from their lucid wombs . . .  
Feel we these things? — that moment have we stept  
Into a sort of oneness, and our state  
Is like a floating spirit's. . . .

The country around Mount Latmos was so beautiful, Keats said,

that therein  
A melancholy spirit well might win  
Oblivion, and melt out his essence fine  
Into the winds. . . .

The second stage in the clear religion of heaven is the worship of a particular thing, such as the moon, as a symbol of natural beauty. In the third book (vv. 142 *et seq.*) Endymion reviews in retrospect his cult of the moon:

What is there in thee, Moon! that thou shouldst move  
My heart so potently? When yet a child  
I oft have dried my tears when thou hast smil'd . . .  
And as I grew in years, still didst thou blend  
With all my ardours: thou wast the deep glen;  
Thou wast the mountain-top — the sage's pen —  
The poet's harp — the voice of friends — the sun;  
Thou wast the river — thou wast glory won;  
Thou wast my clarion's blast — thou wast my steed —  
My goblet full of wine — my topmost deed: —  
Thou wast the charm of women, lovely Moon!

This cult of the moon was influenced, as we have seen, by the similar cult of the moon in Drayton's *Endimion and Phoebe*, the theme of which is neo-Platonic.

When the action of the poem begins, however, Endymion had already passed out of this second stage of the clear religion of heaven; for an unknown goddess, whom he had seen in a neo-Platonic ecstasy

or aesthetic vision, had usurped in his soul the sway previously exercised by Phœbe, the goddess of the moon.

The neo-Platonic quest is directed by means of the neo-Platonic ecstasy in which ideal beauty is experienced. These ecstasies, which occur at intervals throughout the poem, supply the motive force of the action. At the beginning of the first book Endymion had lost all his former interest in mortal things. After the Feast to Pan, when his sister Peona had led him to a cool silvan bower, he confessed to her the cause of his sorrow. One evening he had fallen into a deep sleep in which there appeared to him an unknown goddess of infinite beauty who became his escort through the regions of the air. This flight through the air was influenced also, we have seen, by the similar flight in Drayton's *Endimion and Phoebe*.

(After Endymion had seen this vision of ideal beauty, which appeared to him in the form of a goddess of transcendent loveliness, he lost his former delight in the beauty of material things. "Away I wander'd —," he said, "all the pleasant hues Of heaven and earth had faded. . . ." After he had left his Latmian principality and entered the underworld, he experienced another vision of ideal beauty, at the conclusion of which he said (II, 904 *et seq.*):

Now I have tasted her sweet soul to the core  
All other depths are shallow: essences,  
Once spiritual, are like muddy lees,  
Meant but to fertilize my earthly root,  
And make my branches lift a golden fruit  
Into the bloom of heaven. . . .

This vision of the beautiful unknown goddess, who represents ideal beauty, inspires Endymion to set out on his long quest to discover her. (The details of the ecstasy — the sleep, the dream, the vision of a woman of transcendent beauty, the subsequent distaste for material beauty, and the resolve to seek out the lovely woman of the vision — occur in many Platonic poems. Keats was influenced, as we have seen, by the ecstasy in Shelley's *Alastor*, which is more like a nympholeptic dream than a Platonic vision. He was influenced also by the aerial journey in Drayton's *Endimion and Pheobe*. And, since he derived the complex stages of beauty through which Endymion ascends to fellowship with essence from Spenser, he was influenced above all, I believe, by the ecstasies which Spenser described. The neo-Platonic quest, together with the neo-Platonic ecstasy, is defined in Spenser's *Four Hymnes* and illustrated in his *Faerie Queene*. Prince Arthur was inspired to seek the Faerie Queene throughout the world by an ecstasy in which he saw

her. He related his vision to the Redcross Knight as follows (I. ix. xiii *et seq.*):

Forwearied with my sportes, I did alight  
 From loftie steed, and downe to sleepe me layd;  
 The verdant gras my couch did goodly dight,  
 And pillow was my helmet fayre displayd  
 Whiles every sence the humour sweet embayd,  
 And slombring soft my hart did steale away,  
Me seemed, by my side a royall mayd  
Her daintie limbes full softly down did lay:  
So fayre a creature yet saw never sunny day.

When I awoke, and found her place devoyd,  
 And nought but pressed gras where she had lyen,  
 I sorrowed all so much as earst I joyd,  
 And washed all her place with watry eyen.  
 From that day forth I lov'd that face divyne;  
From that day forth I cast in carefull mynd,  
To seeke her out with labor and long tyne,  
And never vow to rest, till her I fynd.  
Nyne monethes I seeke in vain, yet ni'll that vow unbynd.

Keats marked this passage in his copy of *The Faerie Queene*, which is now in the Lowell Collection in the Harvard College Library.

### Book II

(The action of the second book begins with Endymion's departure from Mount Latmos upon the quest of the unknown goddess whom he had seen in three different ecstasies.) One day, while sitting beneath a wild rose tree by a shady spring, he saw a bud which snared his fancy. When he plucked it and dipped its stalk into the water it swelled and flowered, disclosing a golden butterfly in the midst of its petals. When the butterfly fluttered away, he pursued it over hill and dale until it dipped into a fountain near the mouth of a cavern, where, unseen by him, it changed into a nymph, who informed him that she had been his guide on this day and that he

must wander far  
 In other regions, past the scanty bar  
 To mortal steps,

before he could win the goddess of his visions. The bud, which became in turn the rose, the butterfly, and the nymph, symbolizes the fleeting beauty of this ever-changing world of matter, which, despite its imperfect and evanescent nature, is the only guide by which man can be led into the region of ideal beauty.

After the nymph had vanished Endymion prayed to Phoebe for inspiration and assistance, beseeching her to glance one little beam of tempered light into his bosom and to tie large wings upon his shoulders and point out his love's far dwelling. He had no suspicion that Phoebe, the virgin goddess whom he had worshiped from his childhood, was the beautiful goddess of his visions. After he had prayed to Phoebe he fell into an ecstasy in which he felt that the bars which kept his spirit in were burst, and he heard "airy voices" commanding him to descend into the depths of the earth by means of the cavern beside the fountain.

Descend,  
Young mountaineer! descend where alleys bend  
Into the sparry hollows of the world!  
    . . . He ne'er is crown'd  
With immortality, who fears to follow  
Where airy voices lead: so through the hollow,  
The silent mysteries of earth, descend!

(The idea of having Endymion explore an underworld and some of the descriptive details of this underworld were suggested to Keats, we have seen, by the cavern in Shelley's *Alastor* and the Cave of Mammon in the second book of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.

Dark, nor light,  
The region; nor bright, nor sombre wholly,  
But mingled up, a gleaming melancholy;  
A dusky empire and its diadems;  
One faint eternal eventide of gems.

(The key to the significance of the underworld is found, as we have seen, in the passage in the first book in which Keats outlined the gradations or stages (appreciation of the beauty of nature, appreciation of the beauty of art, friendship, and love) through which Endymion must ascend to attain a fellowship with essence. After he stated the first stage, the cult of the beauty of nature, he said:

Then old songs waken from enclouded tombs;  
Old ditties sigh above their father's grave;  
Ghosts of melodious prophecyings rave  
Round every spot where trod Apollo's foot;  
Bronze clarions awake, and faintly bruit,  
Where long ago a giant battle was;  
And, from the turf, a lullaby doth pass  
In every place where infant Orpheus slept.

The underworld, therefore, symbolizes the imaginative world of art — in particular, the world of poetry — into which man is led in

pursuit of ideal beauty. Endymion's cult of natural beauty in the first book was a necessary preparation for his cult of artistic beauty in the second book. The beauty of art, Keats believed, is a permanent and ethereal distillation of the beauty of nature. Writing Haydon in May 1817, when he was composing the first book of *Endymion*, he stated the function of the poet as follows:

— the looking upon the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, the Earth and its contents, as materials to form greater things — that is to say ethereal things — but here I am talking like a Madman, — greater things than our Creator himself made!!

And in June 1818, when he was visiting the lake country, he restated the function of the poet:

I shall learn poetry here and shall henceforth write more than ever, for the abstract endeavor of being able to add a mite to that mass of beauty which is harvested from these grand materials, by the finest spirits, and put into ethereal existence for the relish of one's fellows.

This interpretation of the significance of the underworld is supported by the nature of the marvels which Endymion experiences there (II. 249 *et seq.*) —

. . . wonders — past the wit  
Of any spirit to tell, but one of those  
Who, when this planet's sphering time doth close,  
Will be its high remembrancers. who they?  
The mighty ones who have made eternal day  
For Greece and England.

The "mighty ones" of England are Keats's Renaissance masters, Spenser, Shakespeare, Chapman, Drayton, and Milton. His romantic love of Renaissance poetry, indeed, made him believe that the sun of English poetry had set at the close of the age of Shakespeare. In the second book of *Endymion* (vv. 723 *et seq.*) he said:

Aye, the count  
Of mighty Poets is made up; the scroll  
Is folded by the Muses; the bright roll  
Is in Apollo's hand: our dazed eyes  
Have seen a new tinge in the western skies:  
The world has done its duty.

The descriptions of the wonders which Endymion saw in the underworld are more splendid in their wild magnificence and grandeur than the more concise, sustained, and finished descriptions in Keats's later poems. After Endymion had experienced the wonders of poetry for a while, his emotions, subjected to intense stimulations,

became utterly exhausted; and, in his weariness, he sat down before the maw of a wide outlet, fathomless and dim.

There, when new wonders ceas'd to float before,  
And thoughts of self came on, how crude and sore  
The journey homeward to habitual self!

In the depressed mood which the return to consciousness produced in him, Endymion prayed to Phoebe to rescue him from the exhausting world of poetry and restore him to the refreshing world of nature.

Within my breast there lives a choking flame —  
O let me cool't the zephyr-boughs among!  
A homeward fever parches up my tongue —  
O let me slake it at the running springs! . . .  
Before mine eyes thick films and shadows float —  
O let me 'noint them with the heaven's light! . . .  
If in soft slumber thou dost hear my voice,  
O think how I should love a bed of flowers! —  
Young goddess! let me see my native bowers!  
Deliver me from this rapacious deep!

In calling the underworld of poetry a "rapacious deep," Keats spoke from his experience. The reading of great poems stirred him to the very depths of his being. When he sat down to read *King Lear* again, he prepared himself for the ordeal by composing a sonnet, in which he said:

. . . once again, the fierce dispute,  
Betwixt Damnation and impassion'd clay  
Must I burn through; once more humbly assay  
The bitter-sweet of this Shakespearean fruit.

In answer to Endymion's prayer, the underworld itself began to teem with grass and flowers. As he resumed his fairy journey, "the floral pride In a long whispering birth enchanted grew Before his footsteps." And he heard a "dew-dropping melody" which, annihilating his habitual self, cast him into a mood of exaltation.

In the course of his journey Endymion came upon the bower in which Adonis sleeps each winter, awaiting the coming of Venus, who each spring awakes him to a summer of love and happiness. A cupid who was watching over Adonis related the story of Venus and Adonis; and Venus, arriving at the end of the narration, promised Endymion that he would one day win the beautiful goddess of his visions. This incident represents one of the "lovely tales" which Keats had read in the poetry of Greece and England. In his version of the Greek myth, indeed, Keats adapted elements from Ovid's

*Metamorphosis*, Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, and Spenser's Garden of Adonis in the *Faerie Queene*.

After experiencing other wonders, Endymion came into a jasmine bower, all bestrewn with golden moss, in which he fell asleep and dreamt that he held his unknown celestial mistress in his arms. This dream, which Keats described with many details, is a nympholeptic dream rather than a neo-Platonic vision. It is no more sensual but it is far more vulgar than the similar dream in Shelley's *Alastor*. The vulgarity is due to the cockney diction to which Keats for the moment reverted.

After describing the meeting of Endymion and Phoebe, which is the climax of the second book, Keats related the origin of the myth.

. . . 'tis a ditty  
Not of these days, but long ago 'twas told  
By a cavern wind unto a forest old;  
And then the forest told it in a dream  
To a sleeping lake, whose cool and level gleam  
A poet caught as he was journeying  
To Phoebus' shrine; and in it he did fling  
His weary limbs, bathing an hour's space,  
And after, straight in that inspired place  
He sang the story up into the air,  
Giving it universal freedom. There  
Has it been ever sounding for those ears  
Whose tips are glowing hot. . .

Anyone who hears the story, Keats said, fears lest any part of it should be engulfed in the eddying wind. And referring to the version which he was relating, Keats concluded:

Thus the tradition of the gusty deep.

In this verse he implied clearly that the underworld, the gusty deep, is the world of poetry in which he read the myth of Endymion and Phoebe.

(In the second book the steady growth of Endymion's soul is made manifest. Just as his early cult of natural beauty had prepared him for his present appreciation of artistic beauty, so now his imaginative participation in the universal humanity of art prepared him for his later experience of friendship and love, the final stages in his ascent to a fellowship with essence. The humanizing effect of art upon his soul is brought out vividly near the end of the second book through his meeting with Alpheus and Arethusa. When he learned the sad story of their love from the murmuring voices of their streams, he forgot his own sorrows in pity of their sad fate.

On the verge  
 Of that dark gulph he wept, and said: "I urge  
 Thee, gentle Goddess of my pilgrimage,  
 By our eternal hopes, to soothe, to assuage,  
 If thou art powerful, these lovers' pains;  
 And make them happy in some happy plains."

### *Book III*

Keats composed the third book in September 1817, while he was visiting Benjamin Bailey in Magdalen Hall, Oxford. According to his original plan, he intended to embody in this book the neo-Platonic ideal of friendship as it is expressed, for instance, in the fourth book of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*; but, influenced by Bailey's Christian humanitarianism, he converted the neo-Platonic ideal of friendship, the love of man for man, into the humanitarian ideal of benevolence, the universal love of man for humanity, which he derived with Bailey's assistance from Wordsworth's *Excursion*. The one, which is personal and active, is an individual discipline; and the other, which is universal and visionary, is a messianic mission.

Bailey, who was aware that Keats was a sceptic in religion, endeavored to persuade him to accept Wordsworth's Christian humanitarianism. In the story of Keats's visit with him in Oxford, which he wrote for Lord Houghton in 1849, he said.

The following passage from Wordsworth's Ode on Immortality was deeply felt by Keats, who however at this time seemed to me to value this great Poet rather in particular passages than in the full length portrait, as it were, of the great imaginative & philosophic Christian Poet, which he really is, and which Keats obviously, not long afterwards, felt him to be.

Bailey underestimated the immediate and considerable effect of his propaganda upon Keats. The letters which Keats wrote in Oxford demonstrate that Bailey's conversation and Wordsworth's poetry awoke in him a love for humanity. In a letter to Reynolds on September 21 he described his boatings on the Isis with Bailey. "There is one particularly nice nest which we have christened 'Reynolds's Cove,' " he wrote, "in which we have read Wordsworth and talked as may be" ; and, referring to their friend John Martin, he asked: "Has Martin met with the Cumberland Beggar or been wondering at the old Leech gatherer?" From such poems as *The Old Cumberland Beggar* and *Resolution and Independence* he conceived of Wordsworth as a sympathetic poet of the human heart. He defined Bailey's mind as Wordsworthian and admired his benevolence. "He delights me," he wrote Jane Reynolds on September 14, "in



the Selfish and (please God) the disinterested part of my disposition." After he left Oxford, as we shall see in the following chapter, he discussed Wordsworth's humanitarianism in his letters to Bailey. He said that he was "ambitious of doing the world some good" and that he placed his "ultimate in the glory of dying for a great human purpose."

The action of the third book takes place in the depths of the sea into which Endymion was transported in a flashing vision —

More suddenly than doth a moment go,  
The visions of the earth were gone and fled —  
He saw the giant sea above his head

Endymion uttered an invocation to Phoebe, describing her influence upon him from childhood and expressing the conflict in his soul between his worship of her and his love for the unknown goddess.

But, gentle Orb! there came a nearer bliss —  
My strange love came — Felicity's abyss!  
She came, and thou didst fade, and fade away —  
Yet not entirely; no, thy starry sway  
Has been an under-passion to this hour.

After Endymion had prayed to Phoebe he raised his eyes and beheld an old man of fearful aspect, his aged bones wrapped up in a cloak of blue o'erwrought with symbols by the deepest groans of ambitious magic. When the old man addressed him in an awful voice, announcing "Thou art the man!" he started back in dismay, fearing that he would be destroyed by magic arts; and then, recovering his courage, he advanced with high defiance. When the grey-haired creature wept, however, his heart warmed with pity and he knelt before the care-worn sage, who spoke falteringly:

Arise, good youth, for sacred Phoebus' sake!  
I know thine inmost bosom, and I feel  
A very brother's yearning for thee steal  
Into mine own: for why? thou openest  
The prison gates that have so long oppress  
My weary watching. Though thou know'st it not,  
Thou art commission'd to this fated spot  
For great enfranchisement. . . .

Before Endymion and Glaucus performed, in friendly collaboration, their great humanitarian mission, Glaucus related his story, which has a special significance. Glaucus, a young god of the sea, loved a nymph, Scylla, who symbolized the spiritual ideal of his dreams. He pursued her, who, like all ideals, ever eluded him, until

he, wearied by his unsuccessful quest, sought comfort in the court of Circe, who symbolized sensuality, and to "this arbitrary queen of sense" "bowed a tranced vassal." As a consequence of his sensuality, Scylla, his spiritual ideal, was slain by Circe, his sensual mistress. But he soon realized the nature of his servitude to Circe, for he saw by accident the horrible shapes of beasts into which her former lovers, victims of lust, had been transformed. Sick with horror and disgust, he would have fled; but Circe divined his intention and condemned him to live for a thousand years in a state of palsied senility and then to die. The theme of this story, the conflict of spiritual love and sensual love, is a common theme in neo-Platonic poetry. Keats learned the story of Glaucus and Scylla from Sandys's *Ovid*, in which Sandys, interpreting mythology in neo-Platonic terms, represented Circe as the symbol of sensual indulgence:

. . . who forsake that faire *Intelligence*,  
To follow *Passion*, and voluptuous *Sense* . . .  
Such, charm'd by Circe's luxurie, and ease,  
Themselues deforme. . . . [Prefatory verses]

Keats altered Ovid's version of the myth, in which Circe, angry because Glaucus would not become her lover, transformed Scylla into a sea monster; and he adapted the episode of Fradubio and Fraelissa in the first book of the *Faerie Queene*, in which the story as well as the theme was suitable for his purpose.

Glaucus discovered the body of Scylla, he told Endymion, and enshrined it in a crystalline palace on the bottom of the sea. For ages he endured senile decay. One day, when a ship was wrecked by a storm, he rescued a magic book and a wand and in the book he read a prophecy which offered him the hope and the means of salvation.

In the wide sea there lives a forlorn wretch,  
Doom'd with enfeebled carcase to outstretch  
His loath'd existence through ten centuries,  
And then to die alone. Who can devise  
A total opposition? No one. So  
One million times ocean must ebb and flow,  
And he oppressed. Yet he shall not die,  
These things accomplish'd: — If he utterly  
Scans all the depths of magic, and expounds  
The meanings of all motions, shapes, and sounds;  
If he explores all forms and substances  
Straight homeward to their symbol-essences;  
He shall not die. Moreover, and in chief,  
He must pursue this task of joy and grief

Most piously; — all lovers tempest-tost,  
 And in the savage overwhelming lost,  
 He shall deposit side by side, until  
 Time's creeping shall the dreary space fulfil:  
 Which done, and all these labours ripened,  
 A youth, by heavenly power lov'd and led,  
 Shall stand before him; whom he shall direct  
 How to consummate all. The youth elect  
 Must do the thing, or both will be destroy'd.

When Endymion heard this prophecy, he cried:

We are twin brothers in this destiny!  
 Say, I intreat thee, what achievement high  
 Is, in this restless world, for me reserv'd.

Endymion's achievement, Glaucus replied, was the resurrection of the innumerable dead lovers whom Glaucus had collected and placed in rows in the crystalline edifice. Only a man like Endymion, who had pursued his spiritual ideal unswervingly, could perform the messianic miracle of the resurrection of the lovers. Glaucus had betrayed his spiritual ideal but he had repented, he had suffered penance, and he had regained his spiritual force by a discipline which is partly neo-Platonic and partly humanitarian. The exploring "all forms and substances Straight homeward to their symbol-essences" is neo-Platonic, and the collecting and preserving of the lovers who were drowned in the sea is humanitarian. Keats found this fusion of neo-Platonism and humanitarianism in Wordsworth's *Excursion*, from which he derived much of his humanitarianism. His phraseology as well as his thought is indebted perhaps to the following passage from the fourth book of *The Excursion* (vv. 332 *et seq.*):

Happy is he who lives to understand,  
 Not human nature only, but *explores*  
*All natures*, — to the end that he may find  
 The law that governs each; and where begins  
 The union, the partition where, that makes  
 Kind and degree, among all visible Beings . . .  
 Through all the mighty commonwealth of things  
 'Up from the creeping plant to sovereign Man.

Keats intended originally, it is probable, to represent Endymion and Glaucus as friends in the neo-Platonic sense; but, influenced by Bailey's propaganda, he absorbed their friendship into their great humanitarian mission. Glaucus taught Endymion the magic rites by which he could restore the lovers to life. Endymion performed them and restored Glaucus to youth and the innumerable lovers, including Scylla, to life and love. After Endymion and Glaucus had

performed their humanitarian mission, they led the host of resurrected lovers to the Temple of Neptune, where Endymion, falling into an ecstasy, heard a voice speak aloud to his "inward senses":

Dearest Endymion! my entire love!  
 How have I dwelt in fear of fate. 'tis done —  
 Immortal bliss for me too hast thou won.  
 Arise then! for the hen-dove shall not hatch  
 Her ready eggs, before I'll kissing snatch  
 Thee into endless heaven. Awake! awake!

#### *Book IV*

(In the fourth book Endymion passed through the stage of love, the fourth and final stage of his ascent to a fellowship with essence. The theme is purely neo-Platonic, without a trace of humanitarianism; for, after Keats returned to Hampstead from his visit with Bailey in Oxford, he became dissatisfied, as I shall show later, with certain principles of Wordsworth's humanitarianism.)

Before analyzing Keats's treatment of the theme of love in the fourth book, let us consider his theory of love in passages scattered throughout the poem. In that passage in the first book in which he explained the four stages through which Endymion must ascend to a fellowship with essence, Keats defined the course and effect of love:

. . . its influence,  
 Thrown in our eyes, genders a novel sense,  
 At which we start and fret; till in the end,  
 Melting into its radiance, we blend,  
 Mingle, and so become a part of it, —  
 Nor with aught else can our souls interknit  
 So wingedly: when we combine therewith  
 Life's self is nourish'd by its proper pith,  
 And we are nurtured like a pelican brood  
 Aye, so delicious is the unsating food,  
 That men, who might have tower'd in the van  
 Of all the congregated world, to fan  
 And winnow from the coming step of time  
 All chaff of custom, wipe away all slime  
 Left by men-slugs and human serpentry,  
 Have been content to let occasion die,  
 Whilst they did sleep in love's elysium.  
 And, truly, I would rather be struck dumb,  
 Than speak against this ardent listlessness:  
 For I have ever thought that it might bless  
 The world with benefits unknowingly;  
 As does the nightingale, upperched high,

And cloister'd among cool and bunched leaves —  
 She sings but to her love, nor e'er conceives  
 How tiptoe Night holds back her dark-grey hood.  
 Just so may love, although 'tis understood  
 The mere commingling of passionate breath,  
 Produce more than our searching witnesseth:  
 What I know not. but who, of men, can tell  
 That flowers would bloom, or that green fruit would swell  
 To melting pulp, that fish would have bright mail,  
 The earth its dower of river, wood, and vale,  
 The meadows runnels, runnels pebble-stones,  
 The seed its harvest, or the lute its tones,  
 Tones ravishment, or ravishment its sweet  
 If human souls did never kiss and greet?

(This definition of love was inspired by the neo-Platonic religion of beauty in women which was cultivated in the erotic poetry of the Renaissance. The description of the course of love occurs in any Elizabethan sonnet sequence, in which several sonnets are devoted to the eyes of the poet's mistress; for through the eyes, which are full of heavenly fire, as Spenser said, the souls of lovers who have loved each other in heaven intermingle and "know each other here belov'd to bee." The description of love as the vital force of the universe is based upon the metaphysical principles of neo-Platonism, according to which, since the universe was created because of God's desire to propagate his beauty beyond itself, beauty is present in all created things and love, which is the desire for the generation of beauty, is both the creative and the preservative principle of the universe.) For the description of the course and influence of love, Keats was especially indebted to a passage in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* (IV. iii. 327 *et seq.*), phrases of which he quoted in his letters.

But love, first learned in a lady's eyes,  
 Lives not alone immured in the brain;  
 But, with the motion of all elements,  
 Courses as swift as thought in every power,  
 And gives to every power a double power,  
 Above their functions and their offices.  
 It adds a precious seeing to the eye;  
 A lover's eyes will gaze an eagle blind;  
 A lover's ear will hear the lowest sound,  
 When the suspicious head of theft is stopp'd;  
 Love's feeling is more soft and sensible  
 Than are the tender horns of cockled snails;  
 Love's tongue proves dainty Bacchus gross in taste.  
 For valour, is not Love a Hercules,  
 Still climbing trees in the Hesperides?

Subtle as Sphinx; as sweet and musical  
 As bright Apollo's lute, strung with his hair,  
 And when Love speaks, the voice of all the gods  
 Make heaven drowsy with the harmony.  
 Never durst poet touch a pen to write  
 Until his ink were temp'ed with Love's sighs;  
 O, then his lines would ravish savage ears  
 And plant in tyrants mild humility.  
 From women's eyes this doctrine I derive:  
 They sparkle still the right Promethean fire;  
 They are the books, the arts, the academes,  
 That show, contain, and nourish all the world,  
 Else none at all in aught proves excellent.

The passage in which Keats said that the unsating food of love is so delicious "That men, who might have tower'd in the van Of all the congregated world . . . Have been content to let occasion die, Whilst they did sleep in love's elysium" was inspired, I believe, by the following passage in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (V. viii. 1-2):

Nought under heaven so strongly doth allure  
 The sence of man, and all his minde possesse,  
 As beauties lovely baite, that doth procure  
 Great warriours oft their rigour to repress,  
 And mighty hands forget their manlinesse. . . .

And so did warlike Antony neglect  
 The worlds whole rule for Cleopatras sight.  
 Such wondrous powre hath wemens faire aspect,  
 To captive men, and make them all the world reject.

Love inspired and guided Endymion in his quest of ideal beauty.  
 In the third book (vv. 92 *et seq.*) Keats said.

O love! how potent hast thou been to teach  
 Strange journeyings! Wherever beauty dwells,  
 In gulph or aerie, mountains or deep dells,  
 In light, in gloom, in star or blazing sun,  
 Thou pointest out the way, and straight 'tis won.  
 Amid his toil thou gav'st Leander breath;  
 Thou leddest Orpheus through the gleams of death;  
 Thou madest Pluto bear thin element;  
 And now, O winged Chieftain! thou hast sent  
 A moon-beam to the deep, deep water-world,  
 To find Endymion.

The thought and the illustrations in this passage were suggested, it is probable, by those in the following passage of Spenser's *Hymne in Honour of Love* (vv. 225 *et seq.*). When a man is in love, Spenser said, addressing the God of Love:

Thou art his god, thou art his mightie guyde,  
 Thou, being blind, letst him not see his feares,  
 But cariest him to that which he hath eyde,  
 Through seas, through flames, through thousand swords and speares.  
 Ne ought so strong that may his force withstand,  
 With which thou arimest his resistlesse hand.

Witnesse Leander in the Euxine waves,  
 And stout Aeneas in the Trojane fyre,  
 Achilles preassing through the Phrygian glaives,  
 And Orpheus daring to provoke the yre  
 Of damned fiends, to get his love retyre:  
 For both through heaven and hell thou makest way,  
 To win them worship which to thee obey.

At the end of the third book Endymion awoke from the trance into which he fell in the Temple of Neptune and found himself again upon the surface of the earth. At the beginning of the fourth book, while he was offering a hecatomb of vows to the gods, he heard an Indian maid, who had strayed from the rout of Bacchus, lamenting her lovelorn fate. At the end of her complaint she praised love as the vital force of the universe:

There is no lightning, no authentic dew  
 But in the eye of love: there's not a sound,  
 Melodious howsoever, can confound  
 The heavens and earth in one to such a death  
 As doth the voice of love: there's not a breath  
 Will mingle kindly with the meadow air,  
 Till it has panted round, and stolen a share  
 Of passion from the heart!

(Endymion admired the dark beauty of the Indian maid, pitied her sad lot, and fell in love with her. His soul was torn by grief and shame, for he was betraying his love for the unknown goddess who had led him through the realms of poetry and humanitarianism.) His love for the Indian maid, he said, had "stolen . . . away the wings wherewith [he] was to top the heavens." Endymion asked the Indian maid who she was, and she sang a song of sorrow and related her adventures in the army of Bacchus. When he ceased to resist his love for the mortal maid, a voice rolled dismally through the wide forest, crying "Woe! Woe! Woe to that Endymion! Where is he?" Then Mercury appeared with two winged steeds, upon which the lovers mounted and soared into the air. For mortal love, although based upon the physical plane, can rise on the winged steeds of the imagination into the heights of idealization.

In their flight through the air, Endymion and the Indian maid entered the region of Sleep and succumbed to his gentle sway. There

is a close connection, Keats believed, between sleep and imaginative insight; for in dreams, as well as in ecstasies engendered by sensations of beauty, the imagination seizes upon ideal beauty and truth, which are qualities of original essence. "The Imagination," he said in his letter to Bailey, "may be compared to Adam's dream — he awoke and found it truth" He adapted Milton's story of Adam's dream into an episode of Endymion's flight through the air on the winged steed. Endymion dreamt that he sought to espouse Jove's daughter and to win immortality. He walked on heaven's pavement and talked brotherly with the gods. He met Phoebe and recognized, for the first time, that she was the unknown goddess of his long quest.

Then doth he spring  
Towards her, and awakes — and, strange, o'erhead,  
Of those same fragrant exhalations bred,  
Beheld awake his very dream. the gods  
Stood smiling; merry Hebe laughs and nods,  
And Phoebe bends towards him crescented.

Endymion was torn between a love for the ideal beauty of his dreams and ecstasies, which had become truth, and his love for the mortal maid who was sleeping by his side. As a result of his hesitation, he lost both the ideal and the material; for the goddess faded away and the mortal maid melted from his grasp and the steed on which she was riding sank to the earth. He suffered, in this situation, the bitterest despair of his long pilgrimage; but, when he had suffered to the limit of his endurance, he was borne into the Den of Quietude, the state of physical exhaustion, in which, "pleasure has no show of enticement and pain no unbearable power. In this Den of Quietude Endymion fell asleep, and he did not see a "pinion'd multitude" pass through the sky singing the pre-nuptial song of Phoebe and inviting the deities of the heavens to be present at her approaching marriage.

Endymion was borne back to the earth, to his principality upon Mount Latmos, and he awoke to find the Indian maid beside him upon the grass. He resolved to enjoy happiness on the earth with the Indian maid and to give up his quest of Phoebe, or essential beauty.

I have clung  
To nothing, lov'd a nothing, nothing seen  
Or felt but a great dream! O I have been  
Presumptuous against love, against the sky,  
Against all elements, against the tie  
Of mortals each to each, against the blooms



Of flowers, rush of rivers, and the tombs  
 Of heroes gone! Against his proper glory  
 Has my own soul conspired: so my story  
 Will I to children utter, and repent.  
There never liv'd a mortal man, who bent  
His appetite beyond his natural sphere,  
But starv'd and died. My sweetest Indian, here,  
Here will I kneel, for thou redeemed hast  
My life from too thin breathing. gone and past  
Are cloudy phantasms. Caverns lone, farewell!  
 And air of visions, and the monstrous swell  
 Of visionary seas! No, never more  
 Shall airy voices cheat me to the shore  
 Of tangled wonder, breathless and aghast.  
 Adieu, my daintiest Dream! although so vast  
 My love is still for thee. The hour may come  
 When we shall meet in pure elysium.  
 On earth I may not love thee; and therefore  
 Doves will I offer up, and sweetest store  
 All through the teeming year: so thou wilt shine  
 On me, and on this damsel fair of mine,  
 And bless our simple lives. . . .

The Indian maid, however, refused Endymion's offer of happiness on the mortal plane because, she said, such a life for them was forbidden by divine powers. His sister Peona urged him to take up again his earthly duties as prince of the shepherds; but he resolved to live the life of a hermit, a seer; for, although the pleasures of men are real, there is a higher happiness which one cannot attain if one takes an earthly realm. Endymion, however, had attained his quest of immortality unwittingly; for the Indian maid changed before his eyes into the goddess Phoebe and made him her immortal paramour. The beauty of a particular woman is a manifestation of ideal or essential beauty, Keats meant, and the love of the beauty of a particular woman is the highest means by which man can attain a fellowship with essence.

#### 4. BAILEY'S OPINION OF *Endymion*

The letters which Bailey wrote John Taylor in 1818 before and after the publication of *Endymion* offer an interesting commentary upon the poem. Bailey and Taylor liked and admired Keats, and they promoted and defended his poetry by every means within their power; but, being rigid moralists, they became very much disturbed by the treatment of love in *Endymion*. Keats completed the final copy of the second book on February 4, 1818, and gave it to Taylor,

his publisher, two or three days later. When Taylor read the book he wrote Bailey, expressing dissatisfaction with it. On February 22 Bailey replied:

Keats I expect here on his way to Devon. I am sorry you are disappointed with his 2<sup>nd</sup> book because I think very highly of it. Nevertheless I own there is much justice & good sense in what you say. But I have no reason as you will perceive to canvass the matter.

[Woodhouse's Scrap-book, Pierpont Morgan Library.]

Bailey did not mention the third book in his correspondence with Taylor; but, in the recollections of Keats which he wrote for Lord Houghton in 1849, he said:

I think he had written the few first introductory lines which he read to me, before he became my guest. I did not then, & I cannot now very much approve that introduction. The "baaing Vanities" have something of the character of what was called "the cockney school." Nor do I like many of the forced rhymes, & the apparent effort, by breaking up the lines, to get as far as possible in the opposite direction of the Pope school. But having said this, which was my impression at the time of the composition of this Book, & so remains now — I must repeat at this distance of time, what I always felt & then expressed, that the Poem throughout is full of beauty, both of thought and diction, and rich beyond any poem of the same length in the English language, in the exuberance, even the overflowing of a fine imagination. [Houghton-Crewe Collection.]

On April 9, 1818, shortly before the publication of *Endymion*, Bailey wrote Taylor:

I am glad *Endymion* is so near the commencement of his Pilgrimage into & through the world of letters. Your remarks are very just. I have now & then a few — & far-between angel-like visits of poetical feelings I once possessed, which, I own with sadness & humility, a long series of bodily sickness, heart-sickness, bitter disappointments of golden hopes has almost effaced from my mind. Yet there is something so ethereal in Keats's poetry that it pierces the cloud. It no longer mantles my spirits when I am in his fairy world. Nothing but the finest poetry can ever touch me but that *does* touch me in the most secret springs, "the rooting-places calm & deep" of my soul. Keats's is of this power.

[Woodhouse's Scrap-book.]

Bailey offered, in this letter, to answer any attack which might be made upon *Endymion* in the periodicals and, if it should be required, to write a review of the poem. On May 20, 1818 he wrote Taylor that he had written a notice of *Endymion* for the *Oxford Herald*. He referred to the indifference of the "learned men" of Oxford to the poem; and he expressed an interesting judgment upon the abrupt conclusion of the fourth book.

A few copies of *Endymion* have already been sold upon the strength of my recommendation to the booksellers. I have written an account of Keats, — [as a

man(?), & perhaps more, than of Endymion. I have said bold things, x—would excite *curiosity*, though I cannot interest the hearts of these learned men. Since they would some of them answer me in the paper, & attack Keats. This would give me a right, in a manner, to another column of the paper: and I feel so strong about the subject that I fear nothing that can be brought against him. I am prepared to concede his *real* faults, but I do not expect to have them attacked, but what I feel to be his beauty & his power. I have read over the Poems two or three times with great attention since my return. The 4th book which I at first thought infamous, I *now* think as fine, & perhaps finer than any. You will stare at this. Nor do I think the abrupt conclusion so bad—it is rather, but not much too abrupt. It is like the conclusion of *Paradise Regained*. I will send a copy of the paper on Sunday for Keats to you at Fleet Street. You will of course have read it before you give or send it him. I send it you for that purpose.

[Woodhouse's Scrap-book.]

On August 29, 1818 Bailey wrote Taylor from Carlisle that he had met John Gibson Lockhart at Bishop Gleig's in Scotland and that he feared that *Endymion* would be "dreadfully cut up" in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, of which Lockhart was a reviewer. Bailey pointed out also what he considered the real fault of *Endymion*.

As a *man of genius* I know Keats is defensible, let him be abused as he may, and I hope they may attack him in this point. But the quarter I *fear* & cannot defend, is the moral part of it. There are two great blotches in it in this respect. The first must offend every one of proper feelings; and indelicacy is not to be borne; & I greatly reproach myself that I did not represent this very strongly to him before it went to the press—not that I apprehend it would have had any great effect; but it would have been some self-satisfaction. The second book, however, was concluded before I knew Keats. The second fault I allude to I think we have noticed. The approaching inclination it has to that abominable principle of Shelley!—that sensual love is the principle of things. Of this I believe him to be unconscious, & can see how by process of imagination he might arrive at so false, delusive & dangerous conclusion—which may be called "a most lame & impotent conclusion." If he be attacked on these points, & on the first he assuredly will, he is not defensible. Poor Keats! He shall not be deserted if he be destined to a disappointment in his poetical career; & he shall be constantly supported & defended by me when he is at all to be defended. My taste has been called "perverted" in relation to him. No matter. I must first be convinced by proof, & not by names. I think this had better not be mentioned to Keats. [Woodhouse's Scrap-book.]

The first fault which Bailey found in *Endymion* is the indelicacy of the nympholeptic dream in the second book (vv. 703 *et seq.*). The aesthetic critic, who is not disturbed by facts of sex, will admit that Keats made an artistic error in employing a nympholeptic dream in a place in which the theme of the poem required a neo-Platonic vision. He will admit also that Keats made an artistic

error in relating this dream in a diction which is sweet, luscious, trivial, and vulgar. The nympholeptic dream in Shelley's *Alastor*, which influenced Keats, is free from indelicacy. Whenever Keats represented the passions of lovers in *Endymion*, he employed the cockney diction of Leigh Hunt. In later poems, such as *The Eve of St. Agnes*, he acquired the power of depicting amorous passions in a pure and refined style. The second fault which Bailey found in *Endymion* is the theme of the fourth book, the principle that love is the vital force of the universe. This neo-Platonic principle, which Keats derived from Spenser and Shakespeare, has none of the sensuality which Bailey thought that he found in it.

Bailey's judgments of Keats's poetry sprang out of a conflict between his fine literary taste and his rigid religious and moral principles. He liked the second book of *Endymion* until Taylor called his attention to its sensual elements. At first he thought that the fourth book was infamous but afterwards he decided that it was as fine as any one of the other books. He was self-centered and somewhat self-righteous, but he was honest and loyal. Taylor had less literary taste than Bailey and he was more inflexible in character. He had little understanding of other men but he knew his deficiency and, on later occasions, whenever he was perturbed by Keats's actions and poetry, he sought advice from Richard Woodhouse. It is an illuminating comment upon Keats's personality that neither Taylor nor Bailey ventured to remonstrate with Keats on the indelicacy of his treatment of love in *Endymion*.

Keats and Bailey were together very little after their inspiring association in Oxford in September 1817; but they corresponded with each other throughout 1818. The impairment of their friendship brings out the irony of human relationships. In February 1819, while Bailey was still perturbed by Keats's moral principles, Keats was disappointed by Bailey's moral conduct. He wrote his brother that Bailey, after paying unsuccessful suit to a "little Jilt in the country," to a Miss Martin, and to Miss Marianne Reynolds in succession, had become engaged to marry Miss Gleig. He decided that Bailey lacked delicacy and principle and that he had conducted himself like a ploughman who wants a wife. His disappointment was bitter, for he had placed Bailey upon a pedestal, and he stopped corresponding with him.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE POT OF BASIL AND OTHER POEMS

#### I

(THE fourth period of Keats's poetry is a complex period in which he was influenced deeply by opposing philosophies of poetry. In the first place, his study of Shakespeare and Milton drew him out of his long allegiance to Spenser. The philosophy of negative capability, which he developed out of Shakespeare's plays, absorbed and dissolved gradually his neo-Platonic philosophy of beauty; and the epic style of *Paradise Lost* supplanted the romantic style of *The Faerie Queene* as his model of poetic style. In the second place, his study of Wordsworth drew him out of his allegiance to Shakespeare and Milton. This second conflict centered around his intuition of *Hyperion*, in which he alternated between negative capability and humanitarianism and between the artificial style of *Paradise Lost* and the natural style of *The Excursion*.)

(The poetic forces of this period manifested themselves in Keats's letters in the fall of 1817 and in his poems in the first half of 1818. In the fall of 1817 Keats studied the character of poetic genius, approaching the subject from two angles of speculation. In the first place, with Hazlitt as his preceptor, he considered the problem of "genius and power," distinguishing between the egotistic genius such as Wordsworth and the negatively capable genius such as Shakespeare. In the second place, with Bailey as his instructor, he considered the problem of "genius and the heart," distinguishing between the selfish and the disinterested genius and interpreting Wordsworth's humanitarianism.)

At the end of October 1817 Keats answered a very "kind" letter which he had received from Bailey. He was very indolent, he said, but he was sensible of Bailey's kindness. He admitted with characteristic honesty that his heart was not always susceptible to sympathy for humanity.

I wish I had a heart always open to such sensations — but there is no altering a Man's nature and mine must be radically wrong for it will lie dormant a whole Month. This leads me to suppose that there are no Men thoroughly [*sic*] wicked, so as never to be self spiritualized into a kind of sublime Misery — but alas! 'tis but for an Hour — he is the only Man "who has kept watch on Man's Mortality" who has philanthropy [*sic*] enough to overcome the disposition [to] an indolent enjoyment of intellect — who is brave enough to volunteer for uncomfortable hours. . . .

A Question [he added] is the best beacon towards a little Speculation. You ask me after my health and spirits. This Question ratifies in my Mind what I have said above. Health and Spirits can only belong unalloyed to the selfish Man — the Man who thinks much of his fellows can never be in Spirits.

Keats vacillated in his judgment of Wordsworth. At one time, following Hazlitt, he would regard Wordsworth as an egotist who had no imaginative insight into the minds of human beings, who shaped and colored the objects of his experience with his own feelings and thoughts. At another time, following Bailey, he would regard Wordsworth as a sympathetic poet of the human heart who, brooding over the sufferings of humanity, "spiritualized" himself into a sublime misery. At still another time he would consider Wordsworth with complete objectivity. Referring to Hazlitt's censure of Wordsworth's *Gipsies*, he wrote Bailey:

Now with respect to Wordsworth's Gipsy, I think he is right and yet I think Hazlitt is right and yet I think Wordsworth is rightest. [If] Wordsworth had not been idle [,] he had not been without his task; nor had they [the] Gipseys — they in the visible world had been as picturesque an object as he in the invisible. The smoke of their fire — their attitudes — their Voices were all in harmony with the Evenings. It is a bold thing to say — and I would not say it in print — but it seems to me that if Wordsworth had thought a little deeper at that Moment he would not have written the Poem at all. I should judge it to have been written in one of the most comfortable Moods of his Life — it is a kind of sketchy intellectual Landscape — not a search after Truth — nor is it fair to attack him on such a subject — for it is with the Critic as with the poet [,] had Hazlitt thought a little deeper and been in a good temper he would never have spied an imaginary fault there.

(In November 1817 Keats decided that he could not accept Wordsworth's humanitarianism. He was firmly intrenched in his philosophy of negative capability, according to which the imagination intuitively isolated particles of truth in the form of beauty — a beauty which, obliterating all other considerations, prevents an irritable reaching after fact and reason.) When Bailey, the rational humanitarian, raised objections to this philosophy, Keats wrote him on November 22, explaining in detail his principles of beauty and imagination. He believed, he said, in the humanitarian principles of human sympathy, the principles of the "heart."

I wish you knew all that I think about Genius and the Heart — and yet I think you are thoroughly acquainted with my innermost breast in that respect, or you could not have known me even thus long and still hold me worthy to be your dear friend. . . .

He distrusted, however, the abstract and utopian system of humanitarianism which was constructed by the faculty of reason, and

he placed his faith in the isolated fragments of truth which are apprehended by the imagination.

O I wish I was as certain of the end of all your troubles [he wrote Bailey] as that of your momentary start about the authenticity of the Imagination. I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination.)

I have already quoted and discussed Keats's definition of the role of the imagination in his philosophy of beauty. In this connection we need only consider his comparison of his mind with Wordsworth's. He defined his own mind as "simple imaginative" and said that what the imagination, in a state of ecstasy, seizes as beauty must be truth. He defined a second type of mind as rational and said that he was unable to believe that even the greatest philosophers discover truth by consecutive reasoning. (In defining negative capability, we remember, he cited Shakespeare's mind as imaginative and Coleridge's as rational.) He defined a third type of mind as complex — "one that is imaginative and at the same time careful of its fruits — who would exist partly on Sensation partly on thought — to whom it is necessary that years should bring the philosophic Mind." "Such an one," he told Bailey, "I consider yours and therefore it is necessary to your eternal Happiness that you not only drink this old Wine of Heaven [imaginative apprehensions of beauty and truth] . . . but also increase in knowledge and know all things." That is, Bailey, whose mind was rational as well as imaginative, was not happy until he had arranged his imaginative intuitions of beauty and truth into a complete and comprehensive system of philosophy. Keats quoted the phrase "years that bring the philosophic mind" from the *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*, in which Wordsworth described the growth of his mind out of the imaginative and aesthetic into the rational and philosophic stage. He formed his conception of the complex mind from his study of Wordsworth with Bailey in Oxford. He remembered doubtless Bailey's description of Wordsworth as a "great imaginative & philosophic Christian Poet."

In this letter Keats gave other illustrations of the difference between his mind and Bailey's:

— and I beg now my dear Bailey that hereafter should you observe anything cold in me not to put it to the account of heartlessness but abstraction — for I assure you I sometimes feel not the influence of a Passion or affection during a whole week — and so long this sometimes continues I begin to suspect myself and the genui[n]eness of my feelings at other times — thinking them a few barren Tragedy Tears. . . .

He said in an earlier letter to Bailey, we remember, that his humanitarian sensations would "lie dormant a whole month" and implied that he did not have "philanthropy [*sic*] enough to overcome the disposition [to] an indolent enjoyment of intellect." (By poetic abstraction he meant the faculty of getting out of himself and his environment into the poetic persons and environments which his imagination created. By virtue of his negatively capable imagination, he said in a later letter, he lived not only in this world but also in a thousand worlds. The consciousness of this poetic abstraction made him suspect the genuineness of the feelings which sprang out of his ordinary human experience.)

Keats was aware, however, of the superiority of his own mind in the matter of human relationships. He perceived that he could, by virtue of his negative capability, enter imaginatively into the minds of other men, understand them, and, by understanding them, pardon their faults and love them for their virtues. Referring to Haydon's indifference to Bailey's efforts in behalf of Cripps, he said:

To a Man of your nature such a Letter as Haydon's must have been extremely cutting — What occasions the greater part of the World's Quarrels? simply this, two Minds meet and do not understand each other time enough to prevent any shock or surprise at the conduct of either party — As soon as I had known Haydon three days I had got enough of his character not to have been surprised at such a Letter as he has hurt you with. Nor when I knew it was it a principle with me to drop his acquaintance although with you it would have been an imperious feeling.

Keats illustrated the difference between their minds, also, in their different conceptions of the problem of human happiness.

You perhaps at one time thought there was such a thing as Worldly Happiness to be arrived at, at certain periods of time marked out — you have of necessity from your disposition been thus led away — I scarcely remember counting upon any Happiness — I look not for it if it be not in the present hour — nothing startles me beyond the Moment. The setting Sun will always set me to rights — or if a Sparrow come before my Window I take part in its existence and pick about the Gravel

Bailey thought that happiness could be attained at certain periods of time, for, being a rational humanitarian, he believed in the progress of society and in the perfectibility of human nature. Keats, however, had no faith in the utopia of the humanitarians. He believed that happiness could be attained only in momentary intuitions of beauty. His negatively capable imagination, it is interesting to observe, enabled him to take part in the existence of birds as well as in the existence of human beings.



In December 1817 and in January 1818, while his brothers were in Devonshire, Keats revised and copied *Endymion* for the press, composed lyric poems, studied Wordsworth and Milton, attended the theatres, wrote dramatic reviews for *The Champion*, and took part in the social life of his friends. He was more intimate with the Dilkes than with the Reynoldses; for his friend, John Hamilton Reynolds, was visiting in Exeter and Jane and Marianne Reynolds displeased him by censuring his brother George for proposing to marry Georgiana Augusta Wylie and emigrate with her to America. He lived a gay, sociable life in this period. He wrote his brothers on December 28:

I have had two very pleasant evenings with Dilke, yesterday and to-day, and am at this moment just come from him, and feel in the humour to go on with this [letter], begun in the morning, and from which he came to fetch me

I spent Friday evening with Wells [he continued]. . . I dined with Haydon the Sunday after you left, and had a very pleasant day. I dined too (for I have been out too much lately) with Horace Smith, and met his two brothers, with Hill and Kingston, and one Du Bois. They only served to convince me how superior humour is to wit, in respect to enjoyment. These men say things which make one start, without making one feel; they are all alike, their manners are alike, they all know fashionables; they have all a mannerism in their very eating and drinking, in their mere handling a decanter. They talked of Kean and his low company. "Would I were with that company instead of yours," said I to myself! I know such like acquaintance will never do for me, and yet I am going to Reynolds on Wednesday. Brown and Dilke walked with me and back to the Christmas pantomime. . . .

He wrote his brothers again on January 5:

Wells and Severn dined with me yesterday: we had a very pleasant day. I pitched upon another bottle of claret — Port — we enjoyed ourselves very much were all very witty and full of Rhyme — we played a Concert from 4 o'clock till 10 — drank your Healths the Hunts and N. B. Severn Peter Pindars. . . . I have had a great deal of pleasant time with Rice lately, and am getting initiated into a little band — they call drinking deep dying scarlet, and when you breathe in your [word illegible] they bid you cry hem and play it off — they call good Wine a pretty tippie, and call getting a Child knocking out an apple, stopping at a Tavern they call hanging out. Where do you sup? is where do you hang out? . . . I was at a dance at Redhall's and passed a pleasant time enough — drank deep and won 10.6 at cutting for Half Guineas. . . .

In the latter part of December 1817, Keats was introduced to Wordsworth by Haydon in Monkhouse's lodgings in Queen Anne Street East. In 1845, when Richard Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton) was preparing his *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats*, Haydon, who had been provoked by erroneous state-

ments in Hunt's *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries*, wrote an accurate and authentic story of the introduction.

London Nov 29<sup>h</sup> 1845

Dear Sir/

Of Course my letter accompanying the Sonnets was *private* —

As you alluded to Keats[']s opinion of Wordsworth If he (Keats) Complained he had a right — because Wordsworth did not behave to Keats when I introduced Keats to him as he ought —

I have a letter of Keats wherein he expresses the most glorious respect & love of Wordsworth and expresses the highest turmoil of pleasure at my sending the first sonnet he addressed me to Wordsworth —

When Wordsworth came to Town, I brought Keats to him, by his Wordsworth's desire — Keats expressed to me as we walked to Queen Anne St East where M<sup>r</sup> Monkhouse lodged, the greatest, the purest, the most unalloyed pleasure at the prospect. Wordsworth received him kindly, & after a few minutes, Wordsworth asked him what he had been lately doing I said he has just finished an exquisite ode to Pan — and as he had not a copy I begged Keats to repeat it, which he did in his usual half chant, (most touching) walking up & down the room. When he had done I felt really, as if I had heard a young Apollo — Wordsworth drily said:

“A Very pretty piece of Paganism.”

This was unfeeling & unworthy of his high Genius to a Young Worshipper like Keats — & Keats felt it *deeply* — so that if Keats has said any thing severe about our Friend; it was because he was wounded — and though he dined with Wordsworth after at my table — he never forgave him.

It was nonsense of Wordsworth to take it as a bit of Paganism for the Time, the Poet ought to have been a Pagan for the time — and if Wordsworth's feeling[s], Christian feelings, were annoyed — it was rather ill-bred to hurt a Youth, at such a moment when he actually trembled, like the String of a Lyre, when it has been touched.

I wish you would send this letter to M<sup>r</sup> Milnes and say I have his last note to me before he left England, that which I will send him for his Volume if he desire[s] it — [This last clause is doubtful].

I am dearly

B. R. Haydon

All Hunt's assertions about it being said at my House is [a] mistake — as well as half his other sayings about both Keats & Shelley —

[Manuscript in the Harvard College Library.]<sup>1</sup>

Hunt, Clarke, and Severn, who also related the incident of Keats's reading the Hymn to Pan to Wordsworth, regarded Wordsworth's dry comment as a typical example of his egotism. Hunt implied that the incident occurred at the “immortal dinner” party which Haydon gave in honor of Wordsworth on December 28. Hunt was not present on this occasion and indeed he did not meet Words-

<sup>1</sup> This is one of a series of letters which Haydon wrote to Edward Moxon, who was publishing Richard Monckton Milnes's *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats*. Other letters from Haydon to Moxon are in the Bemis Collection.

worth in this period. He said <sup>2</sup> that, after Haydon brought Wordsworth to call upon him in 1815, he did not meet Wordsworth again for thirty years. He could not indeed meet Wordsworth on a friendly basis in 1817; for he was printing in *The Examiner* the articles in which Hazlitt was attacking Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey.

Clarke <sup>3</sup> also admitted that he was not present when Keats read the Hymn to Pan to Wordsworth. He learned the story of the incident from Keats himself. "From Keats's description of his mentor's manner, as well as behaviour that evening," he said, "it would seem to have been one of the usual ebullitions of egoism . . . known to those who were accustomed to hear the great moral philosopher discourse upon his own productions, and descant upon those of a contemporary." He related another incident which occurred upon the same or, more probably, a later occasion.

During this same visit, he [Wordsworth] was dilating upon some question in poetry, when, upon Keats's insinuating a confirmatory suggestion to his argument, Mrs. Wordsworth put her hand upon his arm, saying — "Mr. Wordsworth is never interrupted." <sup>4</sup>

Severn's story is too full of errors to be taken into consideration, but it is too vivid to be omitted.

On these occasions Keats introduced me to many of his friends, mostly literary men, with the exception of Haydon, the historical painter, who, at the same time his work interested me, almost frightened me by his excessive vanity and presumption. It was in his house that, in the company of Keats, I first met the famous poet Wordsworth; when, also, were present Leigh Hunt and Reynolds. The burden of conversation was the fashion of a vegetable diet, which was then being pursued by many, led on by the poet Shelley. . . . Leigh Hunt most eloquently discussed the charms and advantages of these vegetable banquets, depicting in glowing words the cauliflowers swimming in melted butter, and the peas and beans never profaned with animal gravy. In the midst of his rhapsody he was interrupted by the venerable Wordsworth, who begged permission to ask a question. "If," he said, "by chance of good luck they ever met with a caterpillar, they thanked their stars for the delicious morsel of animal food." . . .

It was on this occasion that Keats was requested by Haydon to recite his classical Ode to Pan from his unfinished poem "Endymion"; which he forthwith gave with natural eloquence and great pathos. When he had finished, we all looked in silence to Wordsworth for praise of the young poet. After a moment's pause, he coolly remarked, "A very pretty piece of Paganism," and with this cold water thrown upon us we all broke up. <sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Leigh Hunt, *Autobiography*, New York, 1850, Vol. II, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> C. C. Clarke, *Recollections of Writers*, p. 149.

<sup>4</sup> C. C. Clarke, "Recollections of Keats," *Atlantic Monthly* for January 1861.

<sup>5</sup> William Sharp, *Life and Letters of Joseph Severn*, p. 33.

We should like to accept Severn's story as authentic. We should like to believe that Wordsworth had sufficient humor to make a jest upon the vegetable diet of Shelley and Hunt! All of Severn's details, except the central incident of Keats's recital of the Hymn to Pan and Wordsworth's dry comment that it was "a very pretty piece of paganism," are contradicted by the other evidence which we have considered. Severn is the most untrustworthy of all the men who wrote their recollections of Keats. No detail in his reminiscences can be accepted as a fact unless it is supported by other evidence. Different sets of his reminiscences, indeed, contradict one another. In his memory, as the years passed, events which he had experienced became confused with those which he had heard and, it would seem, with those which he had imagined.

The second occasion on which Keats met Wordsworth was the dinner party which Haydon gave in honor of Wordsworth on December 28. Haydon's story of the party brings out the personalities of Wordsworth, Lamb, and Keats in vivid and contrasting colors.

In December Wordsworth was in town, and as Keats wished to know him, I made up a party to dinner, of Charles Lamb, Wordsworth, Keats, and Monkhouse, his friend, and a very pleasant party we had. . . .

On December 28th the immortal dinner came off in my painting-room, with Jerusalem towering up behind us as a background. Wordsworth was in fine cue, and we had a glorious set-to, — on Homer, Shakespeare, Milton and Virgil. Lamb got exceedingly merry and exquisitely witty; and his fun in the midst of Wordsworth's solemn intonations of oratory was like the sarcasm and wit of the fool in the intervals of Lear's passion. He made a speech and voted me absent, and made them drink my health. "Now," said Lamb, "you old lake poet, you rascally poet, why do you call Voltaire dull?" We all defended Wordsworth, and affirmed there was a state of mind when Voltaire would be dull. "Well," said Lamb, "here's Voltaire — the Messiah of the French nation, and a very proper one too."

He then, in a strain of humour beyond description, abused me for putting Newton's head into my picture, — "a fellow," said he, "who believed nothing unless it was as clear as the three sides of a triangle." And then he and Keats agreed he had destroyed all the poetry of the rainbow by reducing it to the prismatic colours. It was impossible to resist him, and we all drank "Newton's health, and confusion to mathematics." It was delightful to see the good-humour of Wordsworth in giving in to all our frolics without affectation and laughing as heartily as the best of us.

By this time other friends joined, amongst them poor Ritchie who was going to penetrate by Fezzan to Timbuctoo. I introduced him to all as "a gentleman going to Africa." Lamb seemed to take no notice; but all of a sudden he roared out, "Which is the gentleman we are going to lose?" We then drank the victim's health, in which Ritchie joined.

In the morning of this delightful day, a gentleman, a perfect stranger, had called on me. He said he knew my friends, had an enthusiasm for Wordsworth

and begged I would procure him the happiness of an introduction. He told me he was a comptroller of stamps, and often had correspondence with the poet. I thought it a liberty; but still, as he seemed a gentleman, I told him he might come.

When we retired to tea we found the comptroller. In introducing him to Wordsworth I forgot to say who he was. After a little time the comptroller looked down, looked up and said to Wordsworth, "Don't you think, sir, Milton was a great genius?" Keats looked at me, Wordsworth looked at the comptroller Lamb who was dozing by the fire turned round and said, "Pray, sir, did you say Milton was a great genius?" "No, sir; I asked Mr. Wordsworth if he were not." "Oh," said Lamb, "then you are a silly fellow." "Charles! my dear Charles!" said Wordsworth; but Lamb, perfectly innocent of the confusion he had created, was off again by the fire.

After an awful pause the comptroller said, "Don't you think Newton a great genius?" I could not stand it any longer. Keats put his head into my books. Ritchie squeezed in a laugh. Wordsworth seemed asking himself, "Who is this?" Lamb got up, and taking a candle, said, "Sir, will you allow me to look at your phrenological development?" He then turned his back on the poor man, and at every question of the comptroller he chaunted —

Diddle diddle dumpling, my son John  
Went to bed with his breeches on.

The man in office, finding Wordsworth did not know who he was, said in a spasmodic and half-chuckling anticipation of assured victory, "I have had the honour of some correspondence with you, Mr Wordsworth." "With me, sir?" said Wordsworth, "not that I remember." "Don't you, sir? I am a comptroller of stamps." There was a dead silence, — the comptroller evidently thinking that was enough. While we were waiting for Wordsworth's reply, Lamb sung out

Hey diddle diddle,  
The cat and the fiddle.

"My dear Charles!" said Wordsworth, —

Diddle diddle dumpling, my son John,

chaunted Lamb, and then rising, exclaimed, "Do let me have another look at that gentleman's organs." Keats and I hurried Lamb into the painting-room, shut the door and gave way to inextinguishable laughter. Monkhouse followed and tried to get Lamb away. We went back but the comptroller was irreconcilable. We soothed and smiled and asked him to supper. He stayed though his dignity was sorely affected. However, being a good-natured man, we parted all in good humour, and no ill effects followed.

All the while, until Monkhouse succeeded, we could hear Lamb struggling in the painting-room and calling at intervals, "Who is that fellow? Allow me to see his organs once more."

It was indeed an immortal evening. Wordsworth's fine intonation as he quoted Milton and Virgil, Keats' eager inspired look, Lamb's quaint sparkle of lambent humour, so speeded the stream of conversation, that in my life I never passed a more delightful time. All our fun was within bounds. Not a word passed that an apostle might not have listened to. It was a night worthy of the Elizabethan age, and my solemn Jerusalem flashing up by the flame of the fire,

with Christ hanging over us like a vision, all made up a picture which will long glow upon —

that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude.

Keats made Ritchie promise he would carry his Endymion to the great desert of Sahara and fling it in the midst.<sup>6</sup>

Keats himself was not very much excited by dining with Wordsworth and Lamb at Haydon's. He had outgrown the impressionable boy who had been inspired by meeting Hunt and Haydon a year before. His admiration for Wordsworth had been cooled a few days before, also, by Wordsworth's comment upon the Hymn to Pan. On January 5 he wrote his brothers a very brief and a very disparaging account of the dinner party.

I forget whether I had written my last [letter] before my Sunday Evening at Haydon's — no I did not or I should have told you Tom of a young man you met at Paris at Scott's of the [name of] Richer I think — he is going to Fezan in Africa there to proceed if possible like Mungo Park — he was very polite to me and enquired very particularly after you — then there was Wordsworth, Lamb, Monkhouse, Landseer, Kingston and your humble Sarvant. Lamb got tipsey and blew up Kingston — proceeding so far as to take the Candle across the Room hold it to his face and show us wh-a-at-sor<sup>k</sup>-fello-he-waas[.] I astonished Kingston at supper with a pertinacity in favour of drinking — keeping my two glasses at work in a knowing way — snugly together — he sent me a Hare last Week which I sent to M<sup>rs</sup> Dilk[e].

Keats saw a great deal of Wordsworth in the latter part of December and the first part of January. In the same letter to his brothers he said:

This day I promised to dine with Wordsworth, and the Weather is so bad that I am undecided for he lives at Mortimer street. I had an invitation to meet him at Kingston's — but not liking that place I sent my excuse — What I think of doing today is to dine in Mortimer Street (Words<sup>th</sup>) and sup here in Feathrs<sup>ne</sup> Buildg<sup>s</sup> as M<sup>r</sup> Wells has invited me. On Saturday I called on Wordsworth before he went to Kingston's and was surprised to find him with a stiff Collar. I saw his Spouse and I think his Daughter.

Keats's personal acquaintance with Wordsworth delayed for several months his acceptance of Wordsworth's philosophy of poetry. He disliked the egotistic and dogmatic qualities of Wordsworth's personality, but he retained his admiration for Wordsworth's more elevated poems. He wrote Haydon on January 10 and his brothers on January 13 that there are three things to rejoice at in this age —

<sup>6</sup> H. B. Forman, Library Edition, Vol. IV, pp. 352-356.

Wordsworth's *Excursion*, Haydon's pictures, and Hazlitt's depth of taste.

Keats's general philosophic position in January is indicated in his reaction to the severe quarrels which arose between Haydon and Reynolds and Haydon and Hunt. On January 13 he wrote his brothers a sympathetic, impartial account of these two quarrels.

The first grew from the Sunday on which Haydon invited some friends to meet Wordsworth. Reynolds never went, and never sent any Notice about it, this offended Haydon more than it ought to have done — he wrote a very sharp and high note to Reynolds and then another in palliation — but which Reynolds feels as an aggravation of the first. — Considering all things, Haydon's frequent neglect of his appointments etc., his notes were bad enough to put Reynolds on the right side of the question — but then Reynolds has no powers of sufferance; no idea of having the thing against him, so he answered Haydon in one of the most cutting letters I ever read; exposing to himself all his own weaknesses and going on to an excess, which whether it is just or no, is what I would fain have unsaid, the fact is they are both in the right and both in the wrong.

The quarrel with Hunt I understand thus far. M<sup>rs</sup> H. was in the habit of borrowing silver of Haydon — the last time she did so, Haydon asked her to return it at a certain time — she did not — Haydon sent for it — Hunt went to expostulate on the indelicacy etc — they got to words and parted for ever. All I hope is at some time to bring them all together again.

Keats's ideal of friendship was neither neo-Platonic nor humanitarian; it was a part of his philosophy of negative capability. It was not only a rational ideal but it was also a quality of his temperament. He really had in himself that imaginative insight and that sympathetic objectivity — in other words that negative capability — which he found in Shakespeare. He gave the finest expression of his ideal of friendship in the letter which he wrote Bailey on January 23. Referring to the quarrels of his friends, he said:

It is unfortunate — Men should bear with each other — there lives not the Man who may not be cut up, aye hashed to pieces on his weakest side. The best of Men have but a portion of good in them — a kind of spiritual yeast in their frames which creates the ferment of existence — by which a Man is propell'd to act and strive and buffet with Circumstance. The sure way Bailey, is first to know a Man's faults, and then be passive — if after that he insensibly draws you towards him then you have no Power to break the link. Before I felt interested in either Reynolds or Haydon — I was well read in their faults yet knowing them I have been cementing gradually with both. I have an affection for them both for reasons almost opposite — and to both must I of necessity cling — supported always by the hope that when a little time — a few years shall have tried me more fully in their esteem I may be able to bring them together — the time must come because they have both hearts — and they will recollect the best parts of each other when this gust is overblown.

The quarrels of his friends disturbed the equilibrium of his world. "I am quite perplexed in a world of doubts and fancies," he wrote his brothers on January 13, "— there is nothing stable in the world; uproar's your only music. . . ." The inconstancy of Haydon, Hunt, and Reynolds increased his admiration for Bailey's stable character. After telling his brothers that he believed that works of genius are the finest things in the world, he exclaimed in quick denial:

No! for that sort of probity and disinterestedness which such men as Bailey possess, does hold and grasp the tip-top of any spiritual honors that can be paid to anything in this world.

(The climax of Keats's reaction against Wordsworth's philosophy of poetry occurs in the letter which he wrote Reynolds on February 3, 1818.)

It may be said that we ought to read our contemporaries, that Wordsworth etc should have their due from us. But, for the sake of a few fine imaginative or domestic passages, are we to be bullied into a certain Philosophy engendered in the whims of an Egotist [?] Every man has his speculations, but every man does not brood and peacock over them till he makes a false coinage and deceives himself. Many a man can travel to the very bourne of Heaven, and yet want confidence to put down his half-seeing Sancho will invent a Journey heavenward as well as any body. We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us, and if we do not agree, seems to put its hand in its breeches pocket. Poetry should be great and unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul, and does not startle it or amaze it with itself, but with its subject. — How beautiful are the retired flowers! how would they lose their beauty were they to throng into the highway crying out, "admire me I am a violet! — dote upon me I am a primrose!"

(The egotism which Wordsworth displayed in the incident of the Hymn to Pan was not the fundamental cause of this severe censure of the egotistic and didactic qualities of Wordsworth's poetry. In November, before he met Wordsworth, he rejected the humanitarianism of Wordsworth and confessed his faith in the negative capability or dramatic objectivity of Shakespeare. This period of his poetry was eminently a period of Elizabethan influence.)

Modern poets [he continued] differ from the Elizabethans in this. Each of the moderns like an Elector of Hanover governs his petty state, and knows how many straws are swept daily from the Causeways in all his dominions and has a continual itching that all the Housewives should have their coppers well scoured: the antients were Emperors of vast Provinces, they had only heard of the remote ones and scarcely cared to visit them. — I will cut all this — I will have no more of Wordsworth or Hunt in particular. Why should we be of the tribe of Manasseh, when we can wander with Esau? why should we kick against the Pricks, when we can walk on Roses? Why should we be owls, when we can be Eagles?



Why be teased with "nice Eyed wagtails" [Hunt's *Nymphs*], when we have in sight "the Cherub Contemplation" [Milton's *Il Penseroso*]? Why with Wordsworth's "Matthew with a bough of wilding in his hand" when we can have Jacques "under an oak etc." [Shakespeare's *As You Like It*]? The secret of the Bough of Wilding will run through your head faster than I can write it. Old Matthew spoke to him some years ago on some nothing, and because he happens in an Evening Walk to imagine the figure of the Old Man, he must stamp it down in black and white, and it is henceforth sacred. I don't mean to deny Wordsworth's grandeur and Hunt's merit, but I mean to say we need not be teased with grandeur and merit when we can have them uncontaminated and unobtrusive. Let us have the old Poets, and Robin Hood. Your letter and its sonnets gave me more pleasure than will the Fourth Book of Childe Harold and the whole of anybody's life and opinions.

The friendship of Keats and Reynolds reached its height in the winter and spring of 1818. They read and discussed poetry, thought out their poetic principles, submitted their poems to each other for criticism, and planned to publish together a series of poetic adaptations of Boccaccio's *novelle*. They disapproved of contemporary poets — Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, and Hunt — and they admired and imitated Renaissance poets. Reynolds' letters to Keats have not survived; but a passage in his review of *Endymion* will serve as a reply to the letter which Keats wrote him on February 3. He censured the triviality and the egotism of modern poets, praised the grandeur and the objectivity of Elizabethan poets, and asserted that Keats possessed the qualities of his Elizabethan masters.

The genius of Mr. Keats is peculiarly classical; and, with the exception of a few faults, which are the natural followers of youth, his imaginations and his language have a spirit and an intensity which we should in vain look for in half the popular poets of the day.

After describing Byron as a splendid egotist whose "poetry always is marked by a haughty selfishness," he continued:

Mr. Keats has none of this egotism — this daring selfishness, which is a stain on the robe of poesy — His feelings are full, earnest, and original, as those of the olden writers were and are; they are made for all time, not for the drawing-room and the moment. Mr. Keats always speaks of, and describes nature, with an awe and a humility, but with a deep and almost breathless affection. — He knows that Nature is better and older than he is, and he does not put himself on an equality with her. You do not see him, when you see her. The moon, and the mountainous foliage of the woods, and the azure sky, and the ruined and magic temple; the rock, the desert, and the sea; the leaf of the forest, and the embossed foam of the most living ocean, are the spirits of his poetry; but he does not bring them in his own hand, or obtrude his person before you, when you are looking at them. Poetry is a thing of generalities — a wanderer amid persons and things — not a pauser over one thing, or with one person. The mind of Mr. Keats, like the minds of our older poets, goes round the universe in its speculations and its

dreams. It does not set itself a task . . . Time is a lover of old books, and he suffers few new ones to become old. Posterity is a difficult mark to hit, and few minds can send the arrow full home. Wordsworth might have safely cleared the rapids in the stream of time, but he lost himself by looking at his own image in the waters. . . .

Reynolds was extravagant in his praise of *Endymion*, for he was defending the poem against the attacks of the *Quarterly* reviewer. The Elizabethan qualities of intensity, grandeur, and objectivity are present in *Endymion* but in very imperfect form. Keats could not embody these qualities in *Endymion*; for he gained an understanding of them while he was composing the poem and indeed by means of composing the poem. He regarded the poem as "a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished." "If *Endymion* serves me as a Pioneer perhaps I ought to be content," he wrote Taylor on February 27, 1818. "I have great reason to be content, for thank God I can read and perhaps understand Shakspeare to his depths. . . . I am anxious to get *Endymion* printed that I may forget it and proceed." He proceeded and in his later poems he attained his poetic ideals. In his great odes he attained intensity; in *Hyperion* he attained grandeur; in several poems he attained negative capability in his description of inanimate nature; and at the time of his death he was on the point of attaining negative capability in his characterization of human beings.

When Keats rejected Wordsworth's philosophy of poetry, after dallying with it, he turned to Milton. He wrote Reynolds on April 27, 1818: "I long to feast upon old Homer as we have upon Shakespeare and as I have lately upon Milton." In the poems which he composed in January, February, and March 1818, there are significant evidences of his study of Milton.

Keats had read Milton as well as Spenser and Shakespeare with Clarke in Enfield in 1813 and 1814. In his juvenile poems there are reminiscences of *Paradise Lost* as well as of *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Comus*, and *Lycidas*. In the *Imitation of Spenser*, the first poem he composed, there is a reminiscence of the seventh book of *Paradise Lost*. In the first and second periods of his poetry, however, the influence of Milton was subordinate.

In the first part of 1817 Keats read Milton with Haydon, who admired Milton almost as much as Shakespeare. In September 1817, while he was composing the third book of *Endymion*, he was persuaded by Bailey to begin a serious study of Wordsworth, Milton, and Dante. This study of *Paradise Lost* revealed itself immediately in the style of the introduction to the fourth book of *Endymion*.

In December 1817 and January and February 1818 Keats read Milton with Dilke, who, after Reynolds, was his most intimate friend in this period. "I and Dilk[e] are getting capital Friends," he wrote his brothers on January 5. "I am in the habit of taking my papers to Dilke's and copying there," he wrote them on January 23; "so I chat and proceed at the same time. I have been there at my work this evening, and the walk over the Heath takes off all sleep, so I will even proceed with you." Keats was stimulated if not instructed by reading and discussing *Paradise Lost* with Dilke. The copies of Milton's poems which they marked and annotated are preserved in the Dilke Collection in the Hampstead Public Library. In an annotation upon the introduction to the fourth book of *Paradise Lost*, Keats referred to Dilke's opinion of the introduction.

A friend of mine says this Book has the finest opening of any. The point of time is gigantically critical — the wax is melted, the seal is about to be applied — and Milton breaks out, "*O for that warning voice*," etc. There is moreover an opportunity for a Grandeur of Tenderness. The opportunity is not lost. Nothing can be higher — nothing so more than Delphic.

We find the very opinion to which Keats referred in an annotation upon the introduction to the fourth book in Dilke's copy of *Paradise Lost*:

The opening of this Book is fearful sublime. — It gives note of dreadful preparation. — It seems to rouse us from a moral slumber and bid us prepare for some strange and unknown consequence. It is fit prelude to the act: — an act that in its consequence was to be felt through all succeeding generations. It is much the finest in the whole work.

At the beginning of 1818, when Keats read *Paradise Lost* with Dilke, he was sufficiently mature to understand and enjoy the intellectual as well as the sensuous, and the terrible as well as the mild, elements of Milton's poetry. In his boyhood, we remember, he had loved Milton for his "sweets of song," preferring "Miltonian tenderness" to "Miltonian storms" and "Eve's fair slenderness" to "Michael in arms." In the first annotation in his copy of *Paradise Lost*, he said:

The Genius of Milton, more particularly in respect to its span in immensity, calculated him, by a sort of birthright, for such an "argument" as the *Paradise Lost*: he had an exquisite passion for what is properly, in the sense of ease and pleasure, poetical Luxury; and with that it appears to me he would fain have been content if he could, so doing, have preserved his self-respect and feel of duty performed; but there was working in him as it were that same sort of thing as operates in the great world to the end of a Prophecy's being accomplish'd: therefore he devoted himself rather to the arduous than the pleasures of Song, solacing himself at intervals with cups of old wine; and those are with some ex-

ceptions the finest parts of the poem. With some exceptions — for the spirit of mounting and adventure can never be unfruitful or unrewarded: had he not broken through the clouds which envelope so deliciously the Elysian field of verse, and committed himself to the Extreme, we should never have seen Satan as described —

But his face  
Deep scars of thunder had entrench'd, etc.

Keats's study of Wordsworth's *Excursion* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* made him understand that great poets are inspired by the religious, political, moral, and economic forces of the age in which they live. A few months later, when he accepted Wordsworth's humanitarianism, he emphasized social purpose and minimized "poetical luxury." At this time, however, he gave an eminently just estimate of the relative value of these two great elements of *Paradise Lost*. In an annotation upon Book I, verses 591-599, he exclaimed:

How noble and collected an indignation against Kings, "*and for fear of change perplexes Monarchs*" etc. His very wishing should have had power to pull that feeble animal Charles from his bloody throne. "The evil days" had come to him; he hit the new system of things a mighty mental blow, the exertion must have had or is yet to have some sequences.

Keats's study of Milton taught him the artistic values of restraint, brevity, intensity, and grandeur. In these respects neither Spenser nor Shakespeare could help him so much as Milton. In his comments upon *Paradise Lost* he revealed his understanding of the grandeur of Milton's subject, the vastness of his conception, the force of his passion, the intensity of his imagination, the richness of his sensuous imagery, and the suggestiveness of his poetic allusions.)

One of the chief qualities which Keats found in Milton is intensity — intensity of passion and intensity of imagination. In an annotation upon Book II, verses 546-561, he observed:

Milton is godlike in the sublime pathetic. In Demons, fallen Angels, and Monsters the delicacies of passion, living in and from their immortality, is of the most softening and dissolving nature. It is carried to the utmost here — "Others more mild" — nothing can express the sensation one feels at "Their song was partial" etc. Examples of this nature are divine to the utmost in other poets — in Caliban "*Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments*" etc. In Theocritus, Polyphemus — and Homer's Hymn to Pan where Mercury is represented as taking his "*homely fac'd*" to Heaven. There are numerous other instances in Milton — where Satan's progeny is called his "*daughter dear*," and where this same Sin, a female, and with a feminine instinct for the showy and martial, is in pain lest death should sully his bright arms, "*nor vainly hope to be invulnerable in those bright arms.*" Another instance is "*Pensive I sat alone.*" We need not mention "Tears such as Angels weep."

In the following passage (IV. 268-272) he found a type of pathos which is peculiarly Miltonic —

Not that fair field  
Of Enna where Proserpin gathering flowers,  
Herself a fairer flower, by gloomy Dis  
Was gathered — which cost Ceres all that pain  
To seek her through the world —

There are two specimens of a very extraordinary beauty in the *Paradise Lost* [he observed]; they are of a nature as far as I have read, unexampled elsewhere — they are entirely distinct from the brief pathos of Dante — and they are not to be found even in Shakespeare — these are according to the great prerogative of poetry better described in themselves than by a volume. The one is in the fol[lowing] — “which cost Ceres all that pain” — the other is that ending “Nor could the Muse defend her son” — they appear exclusively Miltonic without the shadow of another mind ancient or Modern.

In two annotations, also, Keats discussed the intensity of Milton’s imagination. He commented upon Book VII, verses 420-423 as follows:

Milton in every instance pursues his imagination to the utmost — he is “sagacious of his Quarry,” he sees Beauty on the wing, pounces upon it and gorges it to the producing his essential verse. “So from the root springs lighter the green stalk.” etc. But in no instance is this sort of perseverance more exemplified, than in what may be called his *stationing or statuary*. He is not content with simple description, he must station, — thus here we not only see how the Birds “*with clang despised the ground,*” but we see them “*under a cloud in prospect.*” So we see Adam “*Fair indeed, and tall — under a plantane*” — and so we see Satan “*disfigured — on the Assyrian Mount*” This last with all its accompaniments, and keeping in mind the Theory of Spirits’ eyes and the simile of Galileo, has a dramatic vastness and solemnity fit and worthy to hold one amazed in the midst of this *Paradise Lost*.

Keats’s imagination, as sensitive if not as intense as Milton’s, enabled him to appreciate fully Milton’s intense imagery. In an annotation upon Book IX, verses 179-191, he observed:

Satan having entered the Serpent, and inform’d his brutal sense — might seem sufficient — but Milton goes on “*but his sleep disturb’d not.*” Whose spirit does not ache at the smothering and confinement — the unwilling stillness — the “*waiting close*”? Whose head is not dizzy at the possible speculations of Satan in the serpent prison? No passage of poetry ever can give a greater pain of suffocation.

Keats’s comments upon Milton’s intensity were influenced, I believe, by Hazlitt, whose “depth of taste” he admired.

Milton has great gusto [Hazlitt said]. He repeats his blow twice; grapples with and exhausts his subject. His imagination has a double relish of its objects, an inveterate attachment to the things he describes, and to the words describing them. [*On Gusto in The Round Table.*]

He strives to say the finest things in the world, and he does say them. He adorns and dignifies his subject to the utmost. He surrounds it with all the possible associations of beauty or grandeur, whether moral, or physical, or intellectual. He refines on his descriptions of beauty, till the sense aches at them, and raises his images of terror to a gigantic elevation, that "makes Ossa like a wart" [*On Milton's Versification in The Round Table*]

Keats marked the following passage (I. 318-321) —

Or have ye chosen this place  
After toil of battle to repose  
Your wearied virtue, for the ease you find  
To slumber here, as in the vales of Heaven?

And he recorded the sensuous impression which the image in "vales" stimulated in him:

There is a cool pleasure in the very sound of vale. The English word is of the happiest chance. Milton has put vales in heaven and hell with the very utter affection and yearning of a great Poet. It is a sort of Delphic Abstraction — a beautiful thing made more beautiful by being reflected and put in a Mist. The next mention of Vale is one of the most pathetic in the whole range of Poetry

Others, more mild,  
Retreated in a silent Valley etc.

How much of the charm is in the valley! —

Keats was aware, as Bailey and Hunt remarked independently, of the poetic device of making the sound echo the sense. He marked the following passage (III. 487-489) —

A violent cross wind from either coast  
Blows them transverse, ten thousand leagues awry,  
Into the devious air.

And he observed:

This part in its sound is unaccountably expressive of the description.

He had a theory of melody, which Bailey tried to recollect, but he did not make an effort to apply it in an analysis of the melody of this passage.

While Keats was reading *Paradise Lost* and recording his reactions to it, he speculated about the problem of the critical interpretation of poetry. Applying his philosophy of negative capability, he said that a reader might imagine into the mind of the poet — that is, the reader might reproduce by means of his imagination the intuition which the poet had tried to express. In an annotation upon Book I, verses 53-75, he observed:

One of the most mysterious of semi-speculations is, one would suppose, that of one Mind's imagining into another.

Then, considering the problem from the angle of the poet, he continued:

Things may be described by a Man's self in parts so as to make a grand whole which that Man himself would scarcely inform to its excess.

Tennyson, who had the same idea, was impatient with those readers who asked him to interpret his poems.

In this same annotation Keats considered the quality of Milton's imagination:

A Poet can seldom have justice done to his imagination — for men are as distinct in their conceptions of material shadowings as they are in matters of spiritual understanding: it can scarcely be conceived how Milton's Blindness might [here aid?] the magnitude of his conceptions as a bat in a large gothic vault.

He believed that Milton possessed spiritual imagination in a supreme degree. In the letter which he wrote Bailey on November 22, we remember, he illustrated the working of the spiritual imagination by Milton's story of Adam's dream. In the annotation which I have quoted, he recalled Milton's invocation of the Holy Ghost in the opening of the third book of *Paradise Lost* and wondered whether Milton's blindness had sharpened his imaginative insight into spiritual matters. He agreed with Hazlitt, it is probable, that Milton lacked that negatively capable imagination, that faculty of imagining into the minds of other men, in which Shakespeare was pre-eminent.

Keats's study of *Paradise Lost* had an immediate effect upon the intuition of *Hyperion* which was developing in his mind. In September 1817, while he was composing the third book of *Endymion*, he conceived the idea of composing a long poem upon the subject of the fall of Hyperion. He wrote Haydon on September 28:

My Ideas with respect to it [*Endymion*] I assure you are very low — and I would write the subject thoroughly again — but I am tired of it and think the time would be better spent in writing a new Romance which I have in my eye for next summer —

At first, we see, he thought of composing *Hyperion* as a romance such as *Endymion*. In November, while he was composing the fourth book of *Endymion*, he brooded over the story of *Hyperion*. In verses 943 *et seq.* he swore

... By Titan's foe . . .  
By old Saturnus' forelock, by his head  
Shook with eternal palsy. . . .

And in verse 774 he addressed Endymion:

Thy lute-voic'd brother will I sing ere long. . . .

In the latter part of January 1818 Taylor, the publisher of *Endymion*, suggested that Haydon make a drawing of a scene from *Endymion* for the frontispiece; but Haydon proposed to make a drawing of Keats's head for it and afterwards to paint a finished picture from the poem. Keats wrote Haydon on January 23:

I have a complete fellow-feeling with you in this business — so much so that it would be as well to wait for a choice out of *Hyperion* — when that Poem is done there will be a wide range for you — in *Endymion* I think you may have many bits of the deep and sentimental cast — the nature of *Hyperion* will lead me to treat it in a more naked and grecian Manner — and the march of passion and endeavour will be undeviating — and one great contrast between them will be — that the Hero of the written tale being mortal is led on, like Buonaparte, by circumstance; whereas the Apollo in *Hyperion* being a fore-seeing God will shape his actions like one.

This letter gives us an understanding of the intuition of *Hyperion* which Keats had formed in January 1818. In the first place, he had decided to compose *Hyperion* in a "naked and grecian" style instead of in the "deep and sentimental" style of *Endymion* — that is, he had decided to compose a Miltonic epic instead of a Spenserian romance. In the second place, he thought of Apollo, the Olympian god of the sun, as the hero of the poem. As early as January 1818, therefore, he formed an intuition of *Hyperion* which is the same as that of the humanistic and Miltonic version which he composed at the end of 1818 and the beginning of 1819.

(Keats's dissatisfaction with Wordsworth persisted through February, March, and part of April 1818. He did not, however, in this or in any period reject all of Wordsworth's poetic principles. He accepted the empirical principle of sensationism which he was learning from both Wordsworth and Hazlitt, but he rejected Wordsworth's egotism, didacticism, and rational humanitarianism. He wrote his brothers on February 21:

I am sorry that Wordsworth has left a bad impression where-ever he visited in town by his egotism, Vanity, and bigotry. Yet he is a great poet if not a philosopher.)

Keats's opinions of Shakespeare, Milton, Beaumont and Fletcher, Wordsworth, and other poets were influenced, as we have seen, by Hazlitt. In the latter part of January and in February he attended the *Lectures on the English Poets* which Hazlitt was delivering at the Surrey Institution. He wrote his brothers on January 23:



I went last Tuesday, an hour too late, to Hazlitt's Lecture on Poetry, got there just as they were coming out, when all these pounced upon me — Hazlitt, John Hunt and Son, Wells, Bewick, all the Landseers, Bob Harris, Rox of the Burrough [,] aye and more —

He wrote his brothers on February 14:

Hazlitt's last lecture was on Thomson, Cowper, and Crabbe. He praised Cowper and Thomson, but he gave Crabbe an unmerciful licking. . . .

And he wrote them on February 21:

I hear Hazlitt's lectures regularly, his last was on Gray, Collins, Young, etc., and he gave a very fine piece of discriminating Criticism on Swift, Voltaire, and Rabelais. I was very disappointed at his treatment of Chatterton. I generally meet with many I know there. . . .

Others besides Keats, it is probable, objected to Hazlitt's statement that Chatterton's fame was founded upon the precocity of his genius rather than upon the intrinsic quality of his poetry. And, at the beginning of the next lecture, Hazlitt said:

I am sorry that what I said in the conclusion of the last Lecture respecting Chatterton, should have given dissatisfaction to some persons, with whom I would willingly agree on all such matters. What I meant was less to call in question Chatterton's genius, than to object to the common mode of estimating its magnitude by its prematurity. . . .

The Minstrel's song in Chatterton's *Aella*, which Hazlitt quoted in his lecture, influenced, we shall see, the songs which Keats composed in March, a month later.

Keats became acquainted with Richard Woodhouse in February 1818, I believe, before he went to Teignmouth to take care of his brother Tom. Woodhouse was descended from an old landed stock in Herefordshire. Several of his kinsmen were in the wine-trade, and his father was owner or part owner of the White Hart in Bath. He was born in 1788, the eldest of a family of fourteen children. One of his brothers was a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, one was an Anglican clergyman, three were wine merchants, and another studied law but never practised it. Woodhouse was educated at Eton, studied law, lived in the Temple, held a high position as a solicitor, and was one of the founders of the Law Life Insurance Society. He was an intimate friend of John Taylor, whom he met, I presume, in the service of Lord Sommers. "I generally keep my vigil till near twelve," he wrote Taylor, "thanks to those habits of industry you & I imbibed from Lord Sommers." He was an unofficial literary adviser to Taylor and Hessey, the publishers and booksellers, and he inspired their unflinching generosity to Keats. He was a friend of John

Hamilton Reynolds and there was an intimacy, his letters reveal, between various members of their families. He was well grounded in languages and had a wide and sometimes recondite knowledge of Greek, Latin, Italian, French, and Spanish literatures. His influence upon Keats's life and poetry appears in the course of this survey of the evolution of Keats's poetry. He died of pulmonary tuberculosis on September 3, 1834.

The earliest record of Woodhouse's admiration for Keats belongs to the spring of 1818. He addressed a sonnet *To Apollo*. *Written after reading Keats's "Sleep and Poetry,"* copied it into his Scrap-book, and dated it "4 Mar. 1818."

TO APOLLO.

Written after reading Keats's "Sleep and Poetry." —

"Now 'tis a fairer Season Etc — p. 111.

Oh thou, whose unimaginable lay  
Wraps in charmed silence the celestial crew  
Of powers Olympian — who didst an old few,  
After Troy's fall, make tuneful — nor the bay  
To our own sires didst scant, in happier day;  
But with sweet strains high Fancies didst imbue,  
And taughtst them makings, such as ever woo  
The vacant ear, and will not pass away —  
Have these thy glories perish'd? or, in scorn  
Of thankless man, hath thy race ceased to quire?  
Oh no! — Thou hearest. — for lo! the beamed morn  
Chases our night of Song: and, from the lyre  
Waking long-dormant sounds, Keats, thy last born,  
To the glad realm proclaims the coming of his sire.  
4 Mar. 1818.

Woodhouse did not sign his name to the sonnet, but I have no doubt that he composed it. If it had been composed by another person, he would have said so in a note. The sonnet seems to me to be an expression of his discovery of Keats. The first verse is obviously a reminiscence of the Hymn to Pan in the first book of *Endymion*. Keats gave the manuscript of the first book of *Endymion* to Taylor on January 14, 1818, and Taylor gave the manuscript to Woodhouse, who was his literary adviser. Woodhouse was inspired by the first book of *Endymion*, I believe, to read the *Poems* which Keats had published in 1817, the chief poem of which is *Sleep and Poetry*. He was introduced to Keats by Taylor in February, it is probable, before Keats went to Teignmouth, and saw something of him in May and June after Keats returned to Hampstead and before he set out on his excursion into Scotland. His intimate friendship with Keats began in September 1818, after Keats returned from Scotland.

Woodhouse began his great manuscript edition of Keats's poems and letters very soon after he met Keats. He interleaved and annotated a copy of the *Poems* of 1817 in the spring or summer of 1818 and a copy of *Endymion* in November 1818. He wrote Taylor in November 1818:

Do not forget to put in hand for me an *Endymion* to be 1/2 bound in plain brown calf with very loose hollow back & Interleaved — (same as you did his smaller *Poems*) as little of the Edges to be cut away as may be. Give it to one of your most expeditious expeditors (ut expediatur et ut expedet) Lettered merely "*Endymion*." [Woodhouse's Scrap-book]

Woodhouse's interleaved and annotated copy of the *Poems* of 1817 was discovered by Ernest de Sélincourt in the possession of a Mr. Bourdillon. His interleaved and annotated copy of *Endymion* was discovered by H. B. Forman, who incorporated its critical material into his editions of the poem. This copy was discovered afterwards by Miss Lowell in the possession of Mr. W. van R. Whitall of New York. Woodhouse's interleaved and annotated copy of the *Poems* of 1820, which has never been examined and described by a scholar, exists doubtless in the possession of a private collector.

Woodhouse made also four large volumes of transcripts of Keats's poems and letters — the Scrap-book, which is now in the Pierpont Morgan Library, the Commonplace Book, the Book of Transcripts of Keats's *Poems*, and the Book of Transcripts of Keats's *Letters*, which are now in the possession of the Marquess of Crewe. He may have made a fifth volume of this kind. Sir Sidney Colvin said that "A notebook by Woodhouse, containing personal notices and recollections of Keats, was unluckily destroyed by fire at Messers Kegan Paul and Co.'s premises in 1883." The definite contents of the volume are unknown, for Colvin did not have an opportunity to take notes on the volume. It is possible that this volume is the Scrap-book which I have mentioned above.

Woodhouse looked up all persons who had known Keats intimately, took notes on the facts which they could tell him about Keats's life and poetry, and copied the poems of Keats which they had in their possession. He made use of the albums, commonplace books, and manuscript collections of Mary Frogley, Charles Cowden Clarke, John Hamilton Reynolds, Mrs. Charlotte Reynolds, Miss Jane Reynolds, and John Taylor. He was not liked by Charles Brown in the poet's lifetime, for Brown was probably jealous of him; but after Keats's death he met Brown in Italy, won his friendship, and copied his incomparable collection of Keats's later poems.

Notes and letters in Woodhouse's books of transcripts reveal the persons from whom he obtained his Keatsiana. He borrowed Reynolds' Commonplace Book from Taylor, who had borrowed it from Reynolds. He wrote Taylor on November 23, 1820:

I return you non sine gratiis actis Reynolds' volume of poetry — I see there are a few variations in his *Edition* of the Sonnets on the sea, & on the Elgin Marbles, from the copy I had. Perhaps he wrote them from memory — I see he entitles the "Ode to Apollo" a fragment — I need not have been so jealous of your pointing out to me the *best* of those of Keats's new compositions which it contains — the thing speaks for itself — etc. [Woodhouse's Scrap-book]

He obtained Jane Reynolds' Commonplace Book on the pretext of desiring to write some verses in it and, neglecting to return it, received an amusingly formal letter from Miss Reynolds.

Miss Reynolds' Compliments to Mr. Woodhouse — she will feel obliged if he will send by the bearer her album which he took away from Little Britain in August last with the kind intention of writing in it. Miss R. is very sorry to trouble Mr. W. but she has a friend who is anxious to gratify her by contributing some lines to it.

If quite convenient Miss R. will thank Mr. W. to let her have poor Keats's letter at the same time as it is of course very valuable to her.

Thursday morning

[Woodhouse's Scrap-book]

This letter is the one which Keats wrote to Jane and Marianne Reynolds on September 5, 1817 and which survives only in Woodhouse's transcript.

Woodhouse obtained several of the early poems from his cousin Mary Frogley, who had been a member of the Keats-Mathew coterie in 1814, 1815, and 1816. He copied these poems into his Scrap-book and dated his transcription of them November 1818. He said, as we have seen, that Miss Frogley obtained some of them from Kirkman and that the valentine, *Hadst thou liv'd in days of old*, was composed by Keats and sent by his brother George to Miss Frogley. Woodhouse obtained some of Keats's poems and facts about his life from Charles Cowden Clarke, whom he met at a dinner at F. Salmon's in August 1823.

Woodhouse obtained many of the poems and many of the facts in the notes from Keats himself. He was very tactful in his requests for copies of poems and in his inquiries about their sources, occasions, and meanings. In November 1818 he heard that Keats had just received a check for £25 and a sonnet full of sentimental praise from an anonymous admirer in Teignmouth. He desired to obtain a copy of this sonnet, but instead of applying to Keats he wrote to Taylor.

Do you think you could manage to procure me a copy of the Sonnet you were talking of last night — As it is “a thought” complimentary, Keats may not be disposed, out of his excessive modesty, to give copies, and I would not wish to make an unpleasant application to him, but the circumstance is an interesting one, and I sho<sup>d</sup> like to add that to my collection of “Keatsiana” — Do try — Perhaps Reynolds will get one for himself, & it may be done easily through that channel. [Woodhouse’s Scrap-book]

Woodhouse’s tactful effort to obtain a copy of this sentimental sonnet through Taylor and Reynolds failed. The only person to whom Keats gave a copy was his brother George. Woodhouse possessed Keats’s fullest confidence, however, and he might have obtained a copy if he had dared to ask him for it. On another occasion he learned, in answer to a casual question, that Keats had composed a sonnet in memory of his grandmother, Mrs. Alice Jennings, and that he had never before told anyone, not even his brothers, that he had composed it.

In February 1819 Woodhouse asked Keats about the authenticity of the poems which he had obtained from Miss Frogley and other persons; and in April 1819 he was permitted by Keats to copy *Hyperion*, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, and other poems. He became, so to speak, the Official Keeper of Keats’s unpublished poems. On one occasion Keats borrowed his Book of Transcripts for the purpose of copying a poem into the album of a young lady. He had complete charge of the selecting and editing of the poems which were published in 1820, for Keats was ill at that time; and later editors who have compared his texts with those of the autograph manuscripts have approved of his critical judgment. *Hyperion*, the chief poem in the volume of 1820, was printed from the transcript in his Commonplace Book instead of from the autograph manuscript.

Woodhouse regarded Keats in the pure and disinterested spirit in which posterity regards him. In August 1819, when he was lending money to Taylor to lend to Keats, he wrote Taylor:

Whatever People regret that they could not do for Shakespeare or Chatterton, because he did not live in their time, that I would embody into a Rational principle, and (with due regard to certain expediences) do for Keats.

[Woodhouse’s Scrap-book.]

Woodhouse collected facts of Keats’s life and transcribed and investigated Keats’s poems with the consuming enthusiasm with which scholars study Shakespeare’s life and plays. Boswell was perhaps the only scholar who was Woodhouse’s equal in collecting material about a living writer. In his Scrap-book, in a note on a phrase in the *Ode to Apollo*, he expressed the spirit which inspired him in his transcription and annotation of Keats’s poems:

There is a great degree of reality about all that Keats writes and there must be many allusions to particular circumstances, in his poems. which would add to their beauty & interest, if properly understood — To arrest some few of these circumstances, & bring them to view in connexion with the poetic notices of them, is one of the objects of this collection — and of the observations — as it is of the notes in the interleaved copies of his published works. How valuable would such notes be to Shakespeare's Sonnets, which teem with allusions to his life, & its circumstances, his age, his loves, his patrons, etc

R. W

2

The minor poems which Keats composed in the first half of 1818 were either inspired or influenced by his study of Shakespeare, Milton, and Fletcher. On January 16 he composed the *Sonnet on Mrs. Reynolds' Cat*. He wrote it as "a parody of the Miltonic sonnet," de Sélincourt suggested, "the style of which is very happily caught in the opening invocation, in the contraction, and in the general rhythm of the sentences." It was first published by Thomas Hood, the husband of Jane Reynolds, in *The Comic Annual* for 1830. I have adopted the title and the date which Woodhouse gave in his transcripts in his Commonplace Book and Book of Transcripts.

Keats saw very little of Hunt, it seems, in November and December 1817. On January 5 he wrote his brothers: "I have not seen Hunt, he was out when I called — M<sup>r</sup> Hunt looks as well as ever I saw her after her Confinement —." On January 19 he finished copying the first book of *Endymion*; and, before giving it to Taylor to be printed, he showed it to Hunt, who censured its diction as "unnatural" and "high-flown." Hunt and Shelley were "hurt," he wrote his brothers on January 23, because he had not showed it to them before and asked for their advice.

On Wednesday, January 21, Keats called upon Hunt and found him wildly excited over a lock of Milton's hair which Dr. Batty, the physician, had given him. On July 13, 1856 Hunt gave a portion of this lock of Milton's hair to Robert Browning and, in a letter to Browning, related its pedigree. The lock, together with those of Swift and Dr. Johnson, were given to Dr. Batty by Hoole, the translator, who had them from Dr. Johnson. The lock of Milton's hair had once been in the back of a miniature of Milton which was possessed by Addison, who took an interest in the welfare of Milton's daughter Deborah. The lock must have been cut, Hunt said in another connection, when Milton was in the vigor of life, before he wrote *Paradise Lost*, for it was brown without a trace of grey.

Hunt was so sentimentally excited by the gift of the lock of Milton's hair that he composed three sonnets then and there. On

January 21, when Keats called, Hunt challenged him to compose something worthy of the occasion. Keats could no longer respond imaginatively to Hunt's sentimental inspirations; but at Hunt's request he composed his ode *On seeing a Lock of Milton's Hair*. On January 23 he wrote Bailey:

I was at Hunt's the other day, and he surprised me with a real authenticated Lock of *Milton's Hair*. I know you would like what I wrote thereon — so here it is — *as they say of a Sheep in a Nursery Book*. . . .

After copying the ode, he added:

This I did at Hunt's at his request — perhaps I should have done something better alone and at home.

Several autographs and transcripts of the poem have survived. In the Lowell Collection in the Harvard College Library there is a notebook of Hunt's in which Keats wrote the first seventeen verses of his poem on two pages between pages on which Hunt wrote the verses of his *Hero and Leander*. In the excitement of the moment, we may imagine, Hunt seized his own notebook, found two blank pages, and asked Keats to write his poem on them. There is another autograph in Keats's folio Shakespeare and a transcript in his copy of *Endymion*, both of which are in the Dilke Collection in the Hampstead Public Library. There are transcripts also in Woodhouse's Commonplace Book and Book of Transcripts. The autograph in Keats's letter to Bailey and the transcripts in his copy of *Endymion* and in Woodhouse's Commonplace Book and Book of Transcripts are dated January 21.

The ode is animated by that nervous passion which the poets of the Renaissance had inspired in Keats. It is marred, however, by two incongruous images which Keats did not attempt afterwards to revise. He began the ode with two fine verses —

Chief of organic Numbers!  
Old Scholar of the Spheres!

By "organic Numbers" he meant, I suspect, "poetry which has the melody of an organ" instead of "poetry which has the unity of an organism." Seeking a rhyme for "numbers," he thought of "slumbers," which in turn suggested "ears" as a rhyme for "spheres"; and he composed the incongruous verses —

Thy spirit never slumbers,  
But rolls about our ears  
For ever and for ever.

In the case of the second incongruous image, as in the case of the first, the rhymes governed the thought rather than the thought the rhymes. In his first draft he wrote the twelfth verse as "O living fane of Sounds"; but, to avoid the jingle of "sounds" with "sound-est" in the preceding verse, he changed the twelfth verse into "Live Temple of sweet noise."

The following passage, however, has intense emotion and vivid, appropriate imagery —

Lend thine ear  
To a young delian oath — aye, by thy soul,  
By all that from thy mortal Lips did roll;  
And by the Kernel of thine earthly Love  
Beauty, in things on earth and things above,  
When every childish fashion  
Has vanish'd from my rhyme  
Will I grey-gone in passion,  
Give to an after-time  
Hymning and harmony  
Of thee, and of thy Works and of thy Life:  
But vain is now the burning and the strife —  
Pangs are in vain — until I grow high-rife  
With Old Philosophy  
And mad with glimpses at futurity!

Keats promised in this passage to celebrate Milton in verse, foreshadowing *Hyperion*, which is an imitation of *Paradise Lost*. Before he could imitate Milton, he recognized, he must "grow high-rife With Old Philosophy And mad with glimpses at futurity." In the ode, as in *Hyperion*, he conceived of "Beauty, in things on earth and things above" as a chief principle of Milton's philosophy.

With characteristic self-consciousness, Keats was aware of the growth of his intellect. He wrote his brothers on January 23:

I think a little change has taken place in my intellect lately — I cannot bear to be uninterested or unemployed, I, who for so long a time have been addicted to passiveness. Nothing is finer for the purposes of great productions than a very gradual ripening of the intellectual powers. As an instance of this — observe — I sat down yesterday to read "King Lear" once again: the thing appeared to demand the prologue of a sonnet, I wrote it, and began to read — (I know you would like to see it.)

On the same day he wrote Bailey:

I sat down to read King Lear yesterday, and felt the greatness of the thing up to the writing of a Sonnet preparatory thereto — in my next you shall have it.

There is an autograph of the sonnet in Keats's folio Shakespeare. There is a transcript of this letter to his brothers, containing the sonnet, among the transcripts which John Jeffrey, who married



George Keats's widow, made for Lord Houghton. Jeffrey's transcripts are in general too inaccurate to be considered in a study of the texts of Keats's poems; but his transcript of the sonnet represents, it seems, an earlier version than that of the autograph in the Shakespeare. There are transcripts also in Keats's copy of *Endymion* and in Woodhouse's Commonplace Book and Book of Transcripts. The autograph and most of the transcripts are dated January 22, 1818. I quote the autograph —

On sitting down to read King Lear once again.

O Golden-tongued Romance, with serene Lute!  
 Fair plumed Syren, Queen of far-away!  
 Leave melodizing on this wintry day  
 Shut up thine olden Pages, and be mute.  
 Adieu! for, once again, the fierce dispute,  
 Betwixt Damnation and impassion'd clay  
 Must I burn through; once more humbly assay  
 The bitter-sweet of this Shakesperean fruit.

Chief Poet! and ye Clouds of Albion,  
 Begetters of ~~this~~ our deep eternal theme!  
 When through the old oak forest I am gone,  
 Let me not wander in a barren dream:  
 But, when I am consumed in the fire,  
 Give me new Phoenix Wings to fly at my desire.  
 Jan<sup>y</sup> — 22 — 1818 —

Woodhouse suggested that *Endymion*, which Keats was revising and copying at this time, was the particular romance whose pages he shut on that wintry day in January when he opened the pages of *King Lear*. The sonnet represents also his reaction against the poetry of romance in general. In his essay *On Kean in "Richard Duke of York,"* we remember, he made a distinction between poetry of romance, such as *Romeo and Juliet*, and poetry of human passions and affections, such as *King Lear*. In December he preferred the poetry of romance but in January, with the ripening of his intellectual powers, he turned to the poetry of human passions and affections. Sudden changes in his poetic convictions, following conflicts in his mind of new principles with old, are characteristic of his poetic evolution.

In January, I believe, Keats composed *Welcome joy, and welcome sorrow* and *The Castle Builder*. The first is entitled "Fragment" and dated "1818" in George Keats's Book of Autographs and Transcripts (Egerton MSS. 2780). In Woodhouse's Book of Transcripts, both poems are dated "1818" on the authority of "C. B." (Charles Brown); and in his Commonplace Book, the first poem is dated

merely "1818." The two poems were composed in the same period of 1818, for they are remarkably alike in style and substance. The direct and peculiar Miltonic influence in the poems proves that they were by-products of Keats's study of Milton with Dilke in December 1817 and January and February 1818. In this period, too, Keats was intimate with Brown, who preserved and dated the poems.

*Welcome joy, and welcome sorrow* is introduced by a misquotation of a passage from Milton's description of the confused strife in chaos between the whirling, uncombined atoms of the four elements, fire, air, earth, and water —

Under the flag  
Of each his faction, they to battle bring  
Their embryon atoms . . .

[*Paradise Lost*, II. 898 *et seq.*]

With this as a suggestion, Keats brought together and enjoyed, by means of his fancy, things which are divorced in nature. He combined, we might say, the contrary moods of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. He may have been influenced also by Fletcher's song *Hence all you vain delights* and Burton's *Dialogue between Pleasure and Pain*, both of which are sources of Milton's twin poems. The first verse, "Welcome joy, and welcome sorrow," may have been suggested by a heptasyllabic verse in a song in *Comus*, "Meanwhile, welcome joy and feast," or by a verse in Fletcher's song which was mentioned above, "Welcome, folded arms and fixed eyes." Keats's heptasyllabics are closer in form to Fletcher's heptasyllabics than to Milton's mixed heptasyllabics and octosyllabics.

*The Castle Builder*, like *Welcome joy, and welcome sorrow*, represents the lawless play of the fancy. Keats had steeped himself in Renaissance poetry until he had acquired the Renaissance love of contrasts, the Renaissance love of fusing or confusing things contrary by nature. Woodhouse copied into his Book of Transcripts a fragmentary introduction to this poem in the form of a dialogue between the Castle Builder, who is Keats, and Bernadine, who is a foreigner and a friar. In the first speech of the fragment, the Castle Builder said:

In short, convince you that however wise  
You may have grown from Convent libraries,  
I have, by many yards at least, been carding  
A longer skein of wit in Convent Garden.

When Bernadine asked: "What, have you convents in that Gothic Isle?" the Castle Builder described Convent (that is, Covent) Garden in ironic terms. "In such like nonsense," he concluded,

In such like nonsense would I pass an hour  
 With random Friar, or Rake upon his tour,  
 Or one of few of that imperial host  
 Who came unmaimed from the Russian frost.

The body of the poem is a description of the room in which he will sup with his friar.

*Welcome joy, and welcome sorrow* and *The Castle Builder* are similar in imagery as well as in theme and mood. For instance, in the former —

Infant playing with a skull . . .  
 Serpents in red roses hissing;  
 Cleopatra regel-dress'd  
 With the aspic at her breast . . .  
 Let my bower be of yew . . .  
 And my couch a low grass-tomb.

And in the latter —

A skull upon a mat of roses lying,  
 Ink'd purple with a song concerning dying . . .  
 The draperies are so, as tho' they had  
 Been made for Cleopatra's winding-sheet. . . .

The allusion to Cleopatra's death in both poems came from *Antony and Cleopatra*; and in *Welcome joy, and welcome sorrow*, "fair and foul" came from *Macbeth* and "Lethe's weed" from *Hamlet*.

"I have been writing at intervals many songs and Sonnets," Keats wrote his brothers on February 14, "and I long to be at Teignmouth, to read them over to you. . . ." He transcribed five of these lyrics for Reynolds, who was sick — three in a letter on January 31 and two in a letter on February 3. In the letter which he wrote Reynolds on January 31, he copied the lyrics *O blush not so* and *Hence Burgundy, Claret and Port* with humorous comment and concluded:

My Dear Reynolds, you must forgive all this ranting — but the fact is, I cannot write sense this Morning — however you shall have some — I will copy my last Sonnet.

When I have fears that I may cease to be  
 Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,  
 Before high piled books, in character,  
 Hold like rich garners the full ripen'd grain;  
 When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,  
 Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,  
 And think that I may never live to trace  
 Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;  
 And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,  
 That I shall never look upon thee more,

Never have relish in the faery power  
 Of unreflecting love; — then on the shore  
 Of the wide world I stand alone, and think  
 Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.<sup>7</sup>

Since Keats called this sonnet his "last sonnet," he must have composed it after he had composed the sonnet *On sitting down to read King Lear once again* on January 22. And, of course, he composed it before he wrote the letter to Reynolds on January 31. There are transcripts of the letter to Reynolds by Woodhouse and by Brown in the Marquess of Crewe's Collection. There are three separate transcripts of the sonnet — one in Keats's copy of *Endymion*, dated "1817"; another in Woodhouse's Commonplace Book, dated "Feb<sup>y</sup>. 1818"; and still another in Woodhouse's Book of Transcripts, dated "From J. K.'s letter to W. H. R. 31 Jan<sup>y</sup>. 1818."

Keats's fear that he would die before his pen had gleaned his teeming brain was a constant fear from the fall of 1816, when he composed *Sleep and Poetry*, to the end of his life. This sonnet is universally regarded, however, as a prophecy of his premature death.

Keats alluded in the third quatrain, Woodhouse said, to the lady whom he had seen for a few moments in Vauxhall and whose beauty had inspired his octosyllabics *Fill for me a brimming Bowl* in August 1814. The beauty of this lady haunted his memory in January and February 1818. On February 4, Woodhouse noted in his Commonplace Book, he addressed a sonnet to her.

To —

Time's sea hath been five years at its slow ebb,  
 Long hours have to and fro let creep the sand,  
 Since I was tangled in thy beauty's web,  
 And snared by the unglowing of thine hand.  
 And yet I never look on midnight sky,  
 But I behold thine eyes' well memory'd light;  
 I cannot look upon the rose's dye,  
 But to thy cheek my soul doth take its flight.  
 I cannot look on any budding flower,  
 But my fond ear, in fancy at thy lips  
 And hearkening for a love-sound, doth devour  
 Its sweets in the wrong sense: — Thou dost eclipse  
 Every delight with sweet remembering,  
 And grief unto my darling joys dost bring.

The sonnet was first published in *Hood's Magazine* for April 1844. There are transcripts with notes, which I have quoted in connection with *Fill for me a brimming Bowl*, in Woodhouse's Commonplace Book and Book of Transcripts.

<sup>7</sup> I quote the text of the manuscript in Keats's copy of *Endymion* (Dilke Collection).

The farther the experience which Keats expressed receded into the past, the more intensely it glowed in his memory. To his imagination, the beauty of the lady, whom he had seen once and once only, became a symbol of the evanescent beauty of this mutable world of matter.

Now it appears to me [he wrote Reynolds on February 19] that almost any Man may like the spider spin from his own inwards his own airy Citadel — the points of leaves and twigs on which the spider begins her work are few, and she fills the air with a beautiful circuiting. Man should be content with as few points to tip with the fine Web of his Soul, and weave a tapestry empyrean full of symbols for his spiritual eye. . . .

*When I have fears* and *Time's sea* are as closely related in style as in theme. They are the first sonnets in which Keats imitated the style of Shakespeare's sonnets. Up to this time, he had composed forty-one sonnets. His first sonnet, which was irregular, was influenced by the irregular sonnets of the eighteenth century. His other sonnets, which were Petrarchan in form, were influenced by that revival of the Miltonic sonnet which, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, 'drove all other forms of the sonnet out of fashion. In his management of the Petrarchan sonnet he was influenced chiefly by Milton, Wordsworth, and Hunt. From April 16, 1817 to the end of the year, while he was composing *Endymion*, he did not compose a single sonnet. In November 1817 he began to study Shakespeare's songs and sonnets as intensely as he had studied his plays. On November 22 he wrote Reynolds from Burford Bridge that one of the three books he had with him was Shakespeare's *Poems* and that he had never found so many beauties in the sonnets.

*When I have fears*, the third sonnet which Keats composed after he had studied Shakespeare's sonnets, is a direct imitation of the Shakespearean form. The first one, *On Mrs. Reynolds' Cat*, is a parody of the Miltonic sonnet and the second, *On sitting down to read King Lear once again*, is a Petrarchan sonnet. Beginning with *When I have fears*, Keats composed twenty-five sonnets, of which seventeen are Shakespearean, four are Petrarchan, two are irregular Shakespearean, one is absolutely irregular, and one is unrhymed. The best sonnets of this final period, those in which Keats expressed his deepest feelings, are Shakespearean. The four Petrarchan sonnets are either emulative or occasional.

*When I have fears* is Shakespearean in its theme, the mutability of life, as well as in its form. It might, we feel, be a single link in a typical sequence of Renaissance love sonnets. In the individual sonnets of such a sequence, the poet might develop any idea he pleased

provided he related it to the mistress whom he was celebrating in the sequence. In Sonnet 64 Shakespeare developed the theme of the ravages of devouring Time; in the first quatrain, he expressed the mutability of art; in the second quatrain, the mutability of nature; in the third quatrain, the mutability of the beauty of his mistress; and in the couplet, his sadness engendered by these thoughts. Keats took this sonnet, I believe, as the model of his first Shakespearean sonnet. His introduction of the element of love in the third quatrain, therefore, was a conventional step in the development of his theme. In one respect, however, he departed from the Shakespearean form, in which as a rule the couplet which ends the poem expresses a complete thought. He avoided the epigrammatic effect of the final couplet by beginning his last sentence in the middle of the last line of the last quatrain.

*Time's sea* is as Shakespearean as *When I have fears*. Robert Bridges said that "it might have been written by Shakespeare." "It affords a striking example of Keats's intense and almost intuitive artistic sympathy with the genius of Shakespeare," de Sélincourt<sup>8</sup> said. "In rhythm, in the peculiar effect gained by the repetition of phrase, in emotional structure and the management of its crescendo it is probably the most Shakespearean sonnet that Keats ever wrote, the weakness in the twelfth line being its only flaw."

In the letter which he wrote Reynolds on January 31, Keats introduced the song *O blush not so, O blush not so* in a facetious spirit:

My dear Reynolds

I have parcell'd out this day for Letter Writing — more resolved thereon because your Letter will come as a refreshment and will have (sic parvis etc.) the same effect as a Kiss in certain situations where people become over-generous. I have read this first sentence over, and think it savours rather; however an inward innocence is like a nested dove; or as the old song says —

1

O blush not so, O blush not so  
Or I shall think ye knowing;  
And if ye smile, the blushing while,  
Then Maidenheads are going.

2

There's a blush for won't, and a blush for shan't  
And a blush for having done it,  
There's a blush for thought, and a blush for naught  
And a blush for just begun it.

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<sup>8</sup> Ernest de Sélincourt, p. 544.

## 3

O sigh not so, O sigh not so  
 For it sounds of Eve's sweet pip[p]in.  
 By those loosen'd Lips, you have tasted the pips  
 And fought in an amorous nipping.

## 4

Will ye play once more, at nice cut core  
 For it only will last our youth out,  
 And we have the prime of the kissing time  
 We have not one sweet tooth out.

## 5

There's a sigh for yes, and a sigh for no,  
 And a sigh for "I can't bear it" —  
 O what can be done, shall we stay or run[?]  
 O cut the sweet apple and share it.

This song has survived in a transcript in Woodhouse's Scrap-book and in transcripts of the letter to Reynolds which were made by Woodhouse and Brown. Keats's friends relished with keen delight this daring but delicate little song. Reynolds lent his Common-place Book, into which he had copied the song, to Taylor and Taylor lent it to Woodhouse. On November 23, 1820 Woodhouse wrote Taylor:

I return you non sine gratiis actis Reynolds' volume of poetry. . . . I need not have been so jealous of your pointing out to me the *best* of those of Keats's new compositions which it contains — the thing speaks for itself — The subject had not been broached before — Some old writer (Horace I believe) seems to have regretted this in his time, if *my* reading of his line is correct,

Nil intentatum nostri liquere Poetae. . . .

[Woodhouse's Scrap-book.]

When Woodhouse dined with Clarke at F. Salmon's on August 21, 1823, they entertained each other by quoting Keats's unpublished poems. On December 29, 1823 Clarke wrote Woodhouse:

Will you do me the favour to send me those lines of Keats's upon the mystery of the maidenhead. I think them very beautiful. [Woodhouse's Scrap-book.]

Keats composed the song in the spirit and style of the Elizabethan lyric. He found suggestions for the theme in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, in which Ulysses described Cressida as "a daughter of the game" (IV. v. 55 *et seq.*) —

There's language in her eye, her cheek, her lip;  
 Nay, her foot speaks; her wanton spirits look out  
 At every joint and motion of her body.

The play on "blushing" in the first and second stanzas of the song was suggested by Pandar's gay and cynical badinage of Cressida. For instance, Pandar said to Troilus: "You must be witty now. She does so blush" (III. ii. 32). At another time he said to Cressida: "Come, come, what need you blush? Shame's a baby . . ." (III. ii. 42). At another time he said: "What, blushing still?" (III. ii. 108). And at still another time he said: "How now, how now! how go maidenheads?" (IV. ii. 23).

Keats found a suggestion for the play on "sighing" in the third stanza in a song in *Much Ado About Nothing* (II. iii. 64 *et seq.*) —

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more  
Men were deceivers ever . . .  
Then sigh not so, but let them go. . . .

In the fourth stanza Keats developed the *carpe diem* theme which is so common in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century lyrics. In a song in *Twelfth Night* (II. iii. 48 *et seq.*) he read —

What is love? 'Tis not hereafter.  
Present mirth hath present laughter;  
What's to come is till unsure  
In delay there lies no plenty;  
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty,  
Youth's a stuff will not endure.

And in *All's Well that Ends Well* (II. iii. 45) he read:

I'll like a maid the better, whilst I have a tooth in my head.

After Keats had copied the song *O blush not so* in the letter which he wrote Reynolds on January 31, he said:

Now I purposed to write to you a serious poetical Letter, but I find that a maxim I met with the other day is a just one [:] "On cause mieux quand on ne dit pas *causons*." I was hindered however from my first intention by a mere muslin Handkerchief very neatly pinned — but "Hence vain deluding etc." Yet I cannot write in prose, It is a sun-shiny day and I cannot, so here goes,

Hence Burgundy, Claret and Port,  
Away with old Hock and Madeira[,] etc.

My Dear Reynolds [he added], you must forgive all this ranting — but the fact is, I cannot write sense this Morning —

Besides the transcripts of the letter which were made by Woodhouse and Brown, there is a transcript of the poem in Woodhouse's Book of Transcripts, dated "Feb<sup>y</sup>. 1818." There is a transcript of the first sixteen verses in George Keats's Book of Autographs and Transcripts, entitled and dated "Song. 1818," and a transcript of



the last twelve verses in Woodhouse's Commonplace Book, dated "Feb<sup>y</sup>. 1818." Keats composed the poem *ex tempore*, as we have seen, in the letter to Reynolds on January 31.

Keats began the poem in a humorous and ended it in a serious spirit. The diction and the metre, especially in the first part, may be mere doggerel; but the theme represents a significant step in the evolution of Keats's philosophy of poetry. Keats expressed in the poem the neo-Platonic theory of poetic inspiration. On January 30, the day before he composed the poem, he revised that passage in *Endymion* (I. 777 *et seq.*) in which he outlined the neo-Platonic allegory of the romance. The opening verses of the poem anticipate also the fourth stanza of the *Ode to a Nightingale*. Instead of drinking wine, he said, he would drink sensations of natural beauty until, intoxicated, he fell into an ecstasy in which his soul left his body and soared aloft on the wings of the imagination.

God of the Meridian  
And of the East and West  
To thee my soul is flown  
Any my body is earthward press'd —  
It is an awful mission  
A terrible division  
And leaves a gulph austere  
To be filled with worldly fear.

Keats had said, we remember, that his mind was imaginative and that Bailey's mind, like Wordsworth's, was both imaginative and rational. He was beginning to distrust the wild ecstasy in which his imagination apprehended beauty and truth, and he was beginning to think that his imagination should be governed by some rational principle. At the end of the poem he exclaimed:

God of Song  
Thou bearest me along  
Through sights I scarce can bear  
O let me, let me share  
With the hot Lyre and thee,  
The staid Philosophy.  
Temper my lonely hours,  
And let me see thy bow'rs  
More unalarm'd!

The lyrics which Keats wrote in this period were influenced by Fletcher's lyrics as well as by those of Shakespeare. He composed the song *Spirit here that reignest!* in January, it is probable, in his copy of Beaumont and Fletcher's works, on a blank page between *Cupid's Revenge* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. He was influenced by

the style and metre of Fletcher's lyric poetry in two lyrics — *Lines on the Mermaid Tavern* and *Robin Hood* — which he copied into the letter which he wrote to Reynolds on February 3, 1818. He composed his *Robin Hood* in answer to two sonnets on Robin Hood which Reynolds had sent him by the two-penny post — *The trees in Sherwood forest are old and good* and *With coat of Lincoln green and mantle too*.

My dear Reynolds,

I thank you for your dish of Filberts — Would I could get a basket of them by way of des[s]ert every day for the sum of two-pence. . . . About the nuts being worth cracking, all I can say is that where there are a throng of delightful Images ready drawn simplicity is the only thing The first is the best on account of the first line, and the "arrow-foil'd of its antler'd food," and moreover (and this is the only word or two I find fault with, the more because I have had so much reason to shun it as a quicksand) the last has "tender and true." We must cut this, and not be rattlesnaked into any more of the like.

Keats and Reynolds were striving, we have seen, to slough off the triviality, the sentimentality, and the affectation of Hunt's school of poetry. They were reacting also against the egotism and didacticism of Wordsworth's poetry. I have quoted in an earlier context the significant passage in this letter in which Keats compared modern poets, such as Wordsworth and Hunt, with Renaissance poets, such as Shakespeare and Milton.

I don't mean to deny Wordsworth's grandeur and Hunt's merit [Keats concluded], but I mean to say we need not be teased with grandeur and merit when we can have them uncontaminated and unobtrusive. Let us have the old Poets, and Robin Hood. Your letter and its sonnets gave me more pleasure than will the Fourth Book of Childe Harold and the whole of anybody's life and opinions. In return for your Dish of filberts, I have gathered a few Catkins. I hope they'll look pretty.

To J. H. R. In answer to his Robin Hood Sonnets.

No! those days are gone away, etc.

After copying his *Robin Hood*, Keats continued:

I hope you will like them — they are at least written in the Spirit of Outlawry Here are the Mermaid lines.

Souls of poets dead and gone, etc.

The manner in which Keats introduced the two poems to Reynolds, Miss Lowell<sup>9</sup> decided, indicates that he composed *Mermaid Tavern* a day or two before he composed *Robin Hood*. It is possible,

<sup>9</sup> Amy Lowell, Vol. I, pp. 562-563.

however, that he composed them on the same day. In either case, he composed *Mermaid Tavern*, as well as *Robin Hood*, after he had received Reynolds' sonnets on Robin Hood, for it contains an allusion to Robin Hood and Maid Marian.

Keats published these two lyrics in his *Poems* of 1820. There is an autograph of *Mermaid Tavern* in George Keats's Book of Autographs and Transcripts, entitled and dated "Ode. 1818." There are several transcripts — one in Keats's copy of *Endymion*, dated "1818"; two undated ones in Woodhouse's Commonplace Book; one undated transcript in Woodhouse's Book of Transcripts; and the copy in Woodhouse's transcript of Keats's letter to Reynolds. H. B. Forman examined and described an autograph of *Robin Hood* which S. R. Townshend Mayer discovered among Leigh Hunt's manuscripts. This autograph, apparently the first draft, is written on a manuscript with Shelley's sonnet *To the Nile*, which was composed on February 4 or 6. There is a transcript in Keats's copy of *Endymion*, entitled "To John Reynolds, in answer to his Robin Hood sonnets" and dated "1818." There is a transcript with similar title and the same date in George Keats's Book of Autographs and Transcripts. Woodhouse, who transcribed Keats's letter to Reynolds, copied the poem also into his Commonplace Book and his Book of Transcripts.

In his *Lines on the Mermaid Tavern*, Keats celebrated the convivial meetings of Elizabethan and Jacobean poets in the Mermaid Tavern in Bread Street. He knew, we may presume, Fuller's story of the "wit-combats" between Shakespeare and Jonson at the Mermaid Tavern and he knew also Beaumont's epistle to Jonson —

I lie, and dream of your full Mermaid wine. . . .  
   What things have we seen  
 Done at the Mermaid! heard words that have been  
 So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,  
 As if that every one from whence they came  
 Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,  
 And had resolv'd to live a fool the rest  
 Of his dull life. . . .

Keats employed also the common classical and Renaissance conception of an Elysium of poets presided over by Apollo and the Muses. He had already expressed this conception in his *Ode to Apollo* (February 1814) and in his sonnet *To my Brother George* (August 1816).

Keats composed *Mermaid Tavern* and *Robin Hood* in the heptasyllabics of early seventeenth-century poets, such as Jonson, Fletcher, and Browne. In his management of the metre he was influenced

chiefly, in my judgment, by Fletcher, who employed it with graceful lightness in *The Faithful Shepherdess*. He was not so successful in this swift, light metre, however, as in slower, heavier metres. He was beginning to develop, in *Mermaid Tavern*, a type of lyric which, in December 1818, he called a "rondeau." This type of poem I shall discuss later in connection with *Bards of Passion and of Mirth*.

In the first part of February, Keats was drawn into another one of Hunt's poetic contests. He wrote his brothers on Saturday, February 14:

The Wednesday before last Shelley, Hunt and I wrote each a Sonnet on the River Nile, some day you shall read them all.

By his own reckoning, he composed the sonnet on Wednesday, February 4; but Woodhouse, in his Book of Transcripts, dated it "Feb. 6, 1818" and said that he transcribed it "from J. K.'s M.S." There is a transcript in Woodhouse's Commonplace Book, dated "Feb. 6, 1818," and another in Keats's copy of *Endymion*, dated merely "1818." Woodhouse stated in his Book of Transcripts, according to de Sélincourt,<sup>10</sup> that the sonnets were to be written in a quarter of an hour, and that Keats and Shelley finished to time, but that Leigh Hunt sat up till two in the morning working at his. If the three poets composed these sonnets on February 4, they must have done it in the morning or in the early part of the afternoon, for Keats was with Reynolds in the latter part of the afternoon and in the evening. Critics agree that Hunt's sonnet is his best and that it is better than those which Keats and Shelley composed on the same subject. Miss Lowell suggested that Keats derived his knowledge of the Nile from Diodorus' *Historical Library*, from which, we have seen, he drew some of the matter of *Endymion*.

On February 3 Keats wrote Reynolds:

I will call on you at 4 to-morrow and we will trudge together for it is not the thing to be a stranger in the Land of Harpsicols. I hope also to bring you my 2<sup>d</sup> book [the second book of *Endymion*, which he had just finished copying]. In the hope that these Scriblings will be some amusement for you this evening, I remain copying on the Hill. . . .

At four o'clock on February 4, Keats and Reynolds trudged at the harpsicols, we may presume, and read the second book of *Endymion*. In the course of the evening Reynolds, who remained a fervent disciple of Spenser, complained that Keats, in his new allegiance to Milton, was disloyal to Spenser and made him promise to compose some verses in Spenser's style. The next day, February 5, Keats wrote a

<sup>10</sup> Ernest de Sélincourt, p. 576.

sonnet to Spenser, in which he gracefully excused himself from complying with Reynolds' request. I quote the sonnet from the photograph of the autograph manuscript which H. B. Forman published in *The Bookman* for October 1906.

Spenser, a jealous Honorer of thine,  
 A forester deep in thy midmost tree[s]  
 Did last eve ask my promise to refine  
 Some english that might strive thine ear to please —  
 But Elfin-Poet, 'tis impossible  
 For an inhabitant of wintry Earth  
 To rise like Phoebus with a golden quell,  
 Fire-wing'd, and make a morning in his Mirth:  
 It is impossible to escape from toil  
 O' the sudden, and receive thy spinting: —  
 The flower must drink the nature of the soil  
 Before it can put forth the blossoming —  
 Be with me in the Summer days, and I  
 Will for thine honor and his pleasure try.

J. K. Feb. 5 —

It was neither the "wintry earth" nor the "toil" of copying *Endymion*, however, which prevented him from refining some English in Spenser's style. He was not in the mood to imitate Spenser; for he was taking Milton instead of Spenser for his poetic master. By January 23, we remember, he had decided to compose *Hyperion* in the form of a Miltonic epic instead of in the form of a Spenserian romance. And, in his sonnet *On sitting down to read King Lear once again*, he turned from the poetry of romance to the poetry of human passions and affections.

Keats gave a copy of the sonnet to Reynolds on February 6 without doubt; for on February 5 he wrote Taylor: "I will tell Reynolds of your engagement — to-morrow" — that is, to-morrow when he saw Reynolds. He gave a copy of the sonnet also to Eliza Longmore, Reynolds' married sister, who was present, it is probable, in the Reynolds home when he called on February 6. When Lord Houghton printed the sonnet in his Aldine edition of 1876, he observed:

I am enabled by the kindness of Mr. W. A. Longmore, nephew of Mr. J. W. Reynolds, to give an exact transcript of this sonnet as written and given to his mother, by the poet, at his father's house in Little Britain. The poem is dated, in Mrs. Longmore's hand, Feb. 5th, 1818, but it seems to me impossible that it can have been other than an early production and of the especially Spenserian time.

Lord Houghton erred, however, in doubting Mrs. Longmore's dating and in placing the sonnet in the early period of Keats's poetry.

Keats himself dated the autograph manuscript "Feb. 5"; and Woodhouse, in his Book of Transcripts, dated the sonnet "Feb: 5" and said that he copied it "fr. J. K.'s M.S." The thought of the poem, the disinclination to imitate Spenser, proves that Keats composed it in February 1818. The style too belongs to this period. The diction is pure and elevated, and the rhyme scheme is the Shakespearian which Keats adopted at the end of January 1818.

The finest image in the sonnet —

To rise like Phoebus with a golden quell,  
Fire-wing'd, and make a morning in his Mirth —

had its source in Keats's study of Shakespeare's plays. The rare noun "quell," which had already been employed in *Endymion* (II. 537), was derived from *Macbeth* (I. vii. 72). The image may have been suggested by a similar image in Drayton's *Muses Elysium*,

When Phoebus with a face of mirth  
Had slung abroad his beams.

The image may have been suggested also by the image in the following verses in *Troilus and Cressida* (I. i. 39-40):

I have (as when the Sunne doth light a-scorne)  
Buried this sigh, in wrinkle of a smile.

The image certainly occurs in Keats's annotation upon these verses in his folio Shakespeare:

I have not read this copy much and yet have had time to find many faults — however 'tis certain that the Commentators have contrived to twist many beautiful passages into commonplaces as they have done with respect to "a scorn" which they have hocus pocus'd into "a storm" thereby destroying the depth of the simile — taking away all the surrounding atmosphere of Imagery and leaving a bare and unapt picture. Now however beautiful a Comparison may be for a bare aptness — Shakespeare is seldom guilty of one — *he could not be content to "the sun lighting a storm," but he gives us Apollo in the act of drawing back his head and forcing a smile upon the world — "the Sun doth light a-scorn."*

When Keats composed the image in his sonnet, I believe, he recalled his annotation upon Shakespeare's verses; and, when he wrote his annotation, he remembered Drayton's verses. We have therefore the sources of the image and two stages in the development of the image in Keats's mind.

It is interesting to consider Reynolds' side of the friendly argument which inspired Keats to compose his sonnet *To Spenser*. In *The Athenaeum* for 1832, Reynolds published the following sonnet and dated it "1817."

## SONNET TO A FRIEND

We are both lovers of the poets old!  
 But Milton hath your heart, — and Spenser mine; —  
 So let us love them: — you, the song divine, —  
 And I, the tale of times gallant and bold.  
 Be it yours to dream in Paradise, — behold  
 The tresses of fair Eve roll down, and shine  
 Over her bending neck in streams of gold; —  
 While her white hands the struggling roses twine  
 Upon the green bowers of Eden — Mine be it to look  
 At the romantic land of Faëry!  
 See Una sit under a shady tree,  
 And troops of satyrs near a wooded brook,  
 All dancing in a round; — and dimly see,  
 In arbour green, Sylvanus, lying drowsily.  
 1817.

Reynolds did not indicate the period of 1817 in which he wrote this sonnet. If he wrote it in the first part of 1817, Benjamin Bailey was the friend to whom he addressed it. If he wrote it in the latter part of 1817 or in the first part of 1818, he may have addressed it to Keats. Whether he addressed it to Keats or not, it represents his reaction to Keats's new discipleship to Milton.

The sonnet *Blue! 'Tis the life of heaven*, the next poem which Keats composed, was inspired by another friendly difference of opinion with Reynolds — in this case, about the comparative beauty of brown eyes and blue eyes. Reynolds had fallen in love with Miss Eliza Drewe, a young lady of Exeter, who had dark eyes and black hair. In the first week of February, he wrote into his Commonplace Book a sonnet in protest against the blond loveliness which "Sweet poets of the gentle antique line" had sung as the ideal of female beauty. Woodhouse, who had borrowed Reynolds' Commonplace Book from Taylor, transcribed this sonnet into his own Commonplace Book, entitling it "Sonnet written by J. H. Reynolds in a collection of M.S. poetry" and dating it "Feb<sup>y</sup>. 1818."

Upon this sonnet being shewn to Keats [Woodhouse said], he denied the position maintained in the 2 last lines

[dark eyes are dearer far  
 Than orbs that mock the hyacinthine bell]

& entered his protest against it on the opposite blank page.

Woodhouse transcribed both sonnets in his Book of Transcripts as well as in his Commonplace Book; and in both books he dated Keats's sonnet "8 Feb<sup>y</sup>. 1818." Reynolds published his sonnet in

his *Garden of Florence* in 1821; and in a copy of this book, which was described by A. J. Horwood in *The Athenaeum* for June 3, 1876, he transcribed Keats's sonnet and wrote an introductory note:

Keats upon reading the above sonnet [*Sweet poets of the gentle antique line*] immediately expressed his own preference for blue eyes in the following lines: —

A photograph of an autograph manuscript of Keats's sonnet was published in *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* for July 1886. The autograph manuscript lacks the first verse and seems to represent an earlier version than the transcripts which were made by Reynolds and Woodhouse.

The sonnet *Blue! 'Tis the life of heaven* has little poetic value. It shows, however, that the social verse which Keats wrote in this period has little or none of the meanness and sentimentality of his earlier social verse.

Keats was in a happy mood in February. Writing his brothers on February 14, he described jestingly the growth of his poetic reputation:

I am in the high way of being introduced to a squad of people, Peter Pindar, M<sup>rs</sup> Opie, M<sup>rs</sup> Scott — M<sup>r</sup> Robinson, a great friend of Coleridge's, called on me. Richards tells me that my Poems are known in the west country, and that he saw a very clever copy of verses, headed with a Motto from my Sonnet to George — Honours rush so thickly upon me that I shall not be able to bear up against them. What think you — am I to be crowned in the Capitol, am I to be made a Mandarin — No! I am to be invited, M<sup>rs</sup> Hunt tells me, to a party at Ollier's, to keep Shakespeare's birthday — Shakespeare would stare to see me there.

The visit of Henry Crabbe Robinson, the diarist, is indubitable evidence, as Miss Lowell<sup>11</sup> remarked, that Keats was becoming known in the literary world; for Robinson was the Boswell of his day, an insatiable seeker after literary celebrities.

On February 19 Keats composed his beautiful unrhymed sonnet on the song of the thrush. Writing his brothers on February 21, he described the thrushes as the harbingers of spring.

The weather although boisterous to-day has been very much milder. . . . The Thrushes and Blackbirds have been singing me into an idea that it was Spring, and almost that leaves were on the trees. . . . The thrushes are singing now as if they would speak to the winds, because their big brother Jack — the Spring — was not far off.

Keats copied the sonnet on the song of the thrush in a letter which he wrote Reynolds on February 19. In the first part of the letter,

<sup>11</sup> Amy Lowell, Vol. I, p. 575.



which I have quoted in an earlier context, he discussed the process of poetic composition. In the second part of the letter he explained the theme of the sonnet, that a poet, instead of seeking knowledge in books, should, like the thrush, be a passive recipient of natural impressions.

Let us not therefore go hurrying about and collecting honey, bee-like buzzing here and there impatiently from a knowledge of what is to be aimed at; but let us open our leaves like a flower and be passive and receptive — budding patiently under the eye of Apollo and taking hints from every noble insect that favours us with a visit — sap will be given us for meat and dew for drink. I was led into these thoughts, my dear Reynolds, by the beauty of the morning operating on a sense of Idleness — I have not read any Books — the Morning said I was right — I had no idea but of the morning, and the thrush said I was right — seeming to say,

O thou whose face hath felt the Winter's wind,  
Whose eye has seen the snow-clouds hung in mist,  
And the black elm-tops 'mong the freezing stars,  
To thee the Spring will be a harvest-time.  
O thou, whose only book has been the light  
Of supreme darkness which thou feddest on  
Night after night when Phoebus was away,  
To thee the Spring shall be a triple morn.  
O fret not after knowledge — I have none,  
And yet my song comes native with the warmth.  
O fret not after knowledge — I have none,  
And yet the Evening listens. He who saddens  
At thought of idleness cannot be idle,  
And he's awake who thinks himself asleep.

The sonnet was inspired by the song of the thrush operating upon a mood of mental exhaustion and recalling Wordsworth's principle of "wise passiveness." In the course of the two past months, Keats had revised and copied two books of *Endymion*, composed several lyric poems, read a great deal of poetry and prose, and meditated upon his poetic principles. He was inclined, in this mood of mental exhaustion, to accept Wordsworth's philosophy of natural education, according to which sensations or sensuous impressions, which are the primary sources of knowledge, inform man's mind, impress it with quietness and beauty, and feed it with lofty thoughts. These sensations, according to empirical philosophy, develop into complex ideas by means of the process of association. Keats derived the principle of "wise passiveness," it is probable, from Wordsworth's *Expostulation and Reply* and *Tables Turned*. In the first of these poems, a friend, who was William Hazlitt, expostulated with Wordsworth for sitting on an old grey stone and dreaming his life away in-

stead of reading books in which the wisdom of the ages is transmitted. Wordsworth replied:

The eye it cannot chuse but see,  
We cannot bid the ear be still,  
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,  
Against, or with our will

Nor less I deem that there are powers,  
Which of themselves our minds impress,  
That we can feed this mind of ours,  
In a wise passiveness.

Think you, mid all this mighty sum  
Of things for ever speaking,  
That nothing of itself will come,  
But we must still be seeking?

We find in these stanzas the source of Keats's idea that we should not go hurrying about like a bee and collecting knowledge but that we should open our leaves like a flower and be passive and receptive. In *Tables Turned* Wordsworth urged his friend to leave his books and drink in natural sensations.

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife,  
Come, hear the woodland linnet,  
How sweet his music; on my life  
There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!  
And he is no mean preacher;  
Come forth into the light of things,  
Let Nature be your teacher

Wordsworth's natural preachers, the linnet and the throstle, correspond to Keats's thrush, who sings a song of "wise passiveness." Keats, being a clear thinker, knew that the song of his thrush was only partly true; and, after he had copied the sonnet for Reynolds, he observed:

Now I am sensible all this is a mere sophistication (however it may neighbour to any truths), to excuse my own indolence. . . .

And, writing his brothers on February 21, he said:

I am reading Voltaire and Gibbon, although I wrote to Reynolds the other day to prove reading of no use. . . .

The present location of the original letter to Reynolds containing the sonnet is unknown; but H. B. Forman examined the letter, made a transcript of it, and printed it in his editions. He <sup>12</sup> made a very

<sup>12</sup> H. B. Forman, Variorum Edition, Vol. II, p. 200.

interesting analysis of the form of the sonnet. "Keats seems," he said, "to have been really writing in a kind of spiritual parallelism with the thrush's song: it will be noted that line 5 repeats the form of line 1, line 8 of line 4, while lines 11 and 12 are still a closer repetition of lines 9 and 10, so that the poem follows in a sense the thrush's method of repetition." "I think it hardly fantastic," Forman concluded, "to suppose that [Keats] consciously translated the wild melody of the thrush into an unrhymed sonnet-structure." Miss Lowell<sup>13</sup> agreed, with certain reservations, with Forman's analysis. She thought, however, that the repetitions in the poem conform to the regular rhythmic pattern of a Shakespearean sonnet rather than to the free rhythms of a thrush's song. The rhythm of the second quatrain repeats that of the first, but in the third quatrain the rhythm changes, the rhythm of the second half of the quatrain repeating that of the first half, and the poem ends with a reflection in the manner of the Shakespearean sonnet.

Keats and Reynolds planned, we have seen, to compose a series of short metrical romances out of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Keats began his *Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil* in February but composed only a few stanzas before he left Hampstead to join his brothers in Teignmouth, Devonshire. By the middle of February, Reynolds decided to renounce his poetic ambitions. Miss Drewe, it is thought, asked him to give up his poetic career; and Rice, who was a lawyer, persuaded him to study law, obtained for him a position in the office of Mr. Fladgate, a solicitor, and paid the fee of £110. On February 14 Reynolds wrote his *Farewell to the Muses*, one of the best of his sonnets, in the copy of Shakespeare's *Poems* which he gave to Keats. He composed this sonnet in the Shakespearean form which Keats had adopted in the latter part of January. He had been ill for about a month, and in the latter part of February he was stricken with a rheumatic fever which prevented him, for two months or more, from either collaborating with Keats or studying law. Reynolds' illness threw Keats into closer intimacy with Brown and Dilke, who were well and cheerful. Keats wrote his brothers on February 21:

Reynolds has been very ill for some time, confined to the house, and had leeches applied to the chest; when I saw him on Wednesday he was much the same, and he is in the worst place in the world for amendment, among the strife of women's tongues, in a hot and parch'd room. . . . I am a good deal with Dilke and Brown; we are very thick, they are very kind to me, they are well; I don't think I could stop in Hampstead but for their neighbourhood.

<sup>13</sup> Amy Lowell, Vol. I, pp 580-581.

In this period, I believe, Brown, who had written a successful opera, induced Keats to begin the composition of an opera. Lord Houghton printed in 1848 three extracts in blank verse and three songs (*Daisy's Song*, *Folly's Song*, and *The stranger lighted from his steed*) under the title "Extracts from an Opera." In Woodhouse's Book of Transcripts the extract in blank verse, "O were I one of the Olympian twelve," is entitled "Extract -- from an opera ---." After the transcript of this extract, there is a transcript of the verses entitled "Daisy's Song", and after the transcript of this song, there are transcripts of the other extracts, entitled "Extracts from an opera continued ---" signed "J. K." and dated "C. B. 1818"—that is, dated 1818 on the authority of Charles Brown. In Woodhouse's Scrap-book there is a transcript of *The stranger lighted from his steed*, followed by a transcript of *Daisy's Song*, and both transcripts are dated "1818."

The three extracts in blank verse (*O! were I one of the Olympian twelve*, *Oh, I am frightened with most hateful thoughts!* and *Asleep! O sleep a little while, while pearl*) are, it would seem, fragments of the body of the opera. The first is a comment upon the neo-Platonic quest of beauty, the theme of *Endymion*; and the second, a lover's depreciation of the beauty of his mistress, was suggested by Shakespeare's Sonnet 130. *Folly's Song* and *The stranger lighted from his steed* were composed in February doubtless as songs of the projected opera; but *Daisy's Song*, in my judgment, was composed in Teignmouth in March.

Within the three or four first days of March, Keats departed to Teignmouth to take care of his brother Tom, who seemed to be improving in the mild climate of Devonshire. He guessed that George, who had been with Tom for nearly three months, was impatient to return to Hampstead to be near his fiancée, Miss Wylie. He wrote his brothers on February 21:

The occasion of my writing to-day is the enclosed letter — by Postmark from Miss W. Does she expect you in town George?

The lovers were already planning doubtless to be married in June and to emigrate to America. George arrived in Hampstead at the beginning of March, and Keats left for Teignmouth by the next coach. "I had a letter from Tom saying how much better he had got," Keats wrote Bailey on March 13, "and thinking he had better stop — I went down to prevent his coming up." We know the date of his departure from Hampstead from a letter which Hessey wrote

Taylor on March 6. I quote a part of the letter from a transcript in Woodhouse's Scrap-book.

Dear John

George Keats called here to-day to say that his Brother the Poet is gone into Devonshire & has left the third Book [of *Endymion*] with him — he will have it here either to morrow or on Monday — The Proofs he wishes to have sent to Mr. Charles Clarke, 6 Little Warner Street, Clerkenwell — Keats went off on the night of the Storm on the *outside* of the Coach. . . .

Yrs very truly

J A H

Mar. 6. 1818

3

*Isabella; or, the Pot of Basil* is the chief poem which Keats composed in Teignmouth. Keats and Reynolds had planned, we have seen, to compose separately but to publish together a series of short romances out of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Keats began *The Pot of Basil* in Hampstead in February, resumed it in Teignmouth in March, and finished it in April. On April 27 he wrote Reynolds:

I have written for my folio Shakespeare, in which there is the first few stanzas of my "Pot of Basil". I have the rest here finish'd, and will copy the whole out fair shortly, and George will bring it you. The Compliment is paid by us to Boccace, whether we publish or no. so there is content in this world — mine is short — you must be deliberate about yours: you must not think of it till many months after you are quite well: — then put your passion to it, and I shall be bound up with you in the shadows of Mind, as we are in our matters of human life. Perhaps a Stanza or two will not be too foreign to your Sickness. [He quoted stanzas xii, xiii, and xxx.]

Keats wrote the opening stanzas on loose sheets of paper, we may presume, and inserted them in his folio Shakespeare, for there is no trace of them in the folio which is in the Dilke Collection. On May 3 he wrote Reynolds:

I have written to George for the first stanzas of my Isabel — I shall have them soon and will copy the whole out for you.

He wrote Bailey on June 10:

I want to read you my "Pot of Basil" if you go to Scotland I should much like to read it there to you among the Snows of next Winter.

Keats did not give Reynolds a copy of his romance until he had returned from his excursion into Scotland. On September 21 he wrote Reynolds, who had gone to Exeter:

Had I known you would have set out so soon I could have sent you the "Pot of Basil" for I had copied it out ready.

On Tuesday, October 13, he met Reynolds, who had returned to London, and gave him the copy of the romance. On Wednesday, October 14, Reynolds wrote him, urging him to publish *The Pot of Basil* as an answer to the ridicule which the reviewers of *Endymion* had heaped upon him.

You will remember that we were [to] pu[t out] together [Reynolds concluded]. I give over all intention and you ought to be alone. I can never write anything now — my mind is taken the other way, — But I shall set my heart on having you, high, as you ought to be. Do *you* get Fame,— and I shall have it in being your affectionate and steady friend.

Reynolds resumed afterwards his project of translating Boccaccio's tales into English verse. In 1821, after Keats's death, he published *The Garden of Florence and Other Poems*. In the Advertisement to this volume he said:

The stories from Boccaccio (The Garden of Florence, and The Ladye of Provence) were to have been associated with tales from the same source, intended to have been written by a friend; — but illness on his part, and distracting engagements on mine, prevented us from accomplishing our plan at the time; and Death now, to my deep sorrow, has frustrated it for ever! He, who is gone, was one of the very kindest friends I possessed, and yet he was not kinder perhaps to me, than to others. . . One story he completed, and that is to me now the most pathetic poem in existence!

The plan of Keats and Reynolds to compose short metrical romances out of Boccaccio's *Decameron* had its source in their intimate association with Leigh Hunt in November and December 1816, although they had reacted against Hunt in the period in which they made the plan. Hunt was a leader in the revival of Italian romance in nineteenth-century English poetry. In his *Story of Rimini* he anticipated Byron's *Beppo* and influenced Keats's *Pot of Basil*, Reynolds' *Garden of Florence*, and Proctor's *Sicilian Tale*. He had a comprehensive knowledge of Italian literature and he read and discussed Italian poems with his friends. In a letter which he wrote to Mary Shelley on August 4, 1818, we have an example of his exhorting his friends to read Italian poetry. After giving cursory judgments of Pulci, Boiardo, Ariosto, Petrarch, and Dante, he concluded:

Shelley told me once he would read Boccaccio. Pray make him do so now, especially the tales of the Falcon; of the Pot of Basil; of the king who came to kiss the young girl that was sick for love of him; and of the lover who returned and found his mistress married on account of false reports of him, and who coming in upon her at night-time, and begging her to let him lie down a little by her side, without disturbing her husband, quietly broke his heart there.







In the choice of *Isabella; or, the Pot of Basil* as the tale which he should adapt from Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Keats may have been influenced, as H. W. Garrod<sup>14</sup> suggested, by Hazlitt as well as by Hunt. In February, when he began *Isabella*, he was attending Hazlitt's *Lectures on the English Poets*. In the lecture on Dryden, Hazlitt referred to the tales which Dryden adapted from Chaucer and Boccaccio.

His Tales have been, upon the whole, the most popular of his works; and I should think that a translation of some of the other serious tales in Boccaccio and Chaucer, as that of *Isabella*, the *Falcon*, of *Constance*, the *Prioress's Tale*, and others, if executed with taste and spirit, could not fail to succeed in the present day.

Keats published *The Pot of Basil* in his *Poems* of 1820. H. B. Forman examined and incorporated into his textual notes two fragments of the original manuscript, containing stanzas xxx to xl exclusive of stanza xxxii. In George Keats's Book of Autographs and Transcripts, there is an autograph manuscript which is doubtless the fair copy which Keats submitted to Reynolds in October 1818. There is a transcript in shorthand in Woodhouse's Scrap-book and transcripts in longhand in his Commonplace Book and Book of Transcripts.

Woodhouse made a note in his Book of Transcripts that Keats read Boccaccio's tale of the Pot of Basil, the fifth novel of the fourth day, in the fifth edition of the early seventeenth-century English translation entitled *The Novels & Tales of the renowned John Boccaccio, the first refiner of Italian Prose: containing a hundred curious novels by 7 honourable ladies & 3 noble gentlemen, etc. The 5th edn. London. Printed for Awnsham Churchill at the Black Swan at Amen Corner. MDCLXXXIV.*

Keats followed the plot of Boccaccio's novel very closely. He transferred the setting from Messina to Florence, however, and reduced the number of *Isabella's* brothers from three to two. Boccaccio told a simple, direct series of striking and tragic incidents, with very little description of persons and setting, with slight motivation of actions, and with meagre analysis of emotions. Keats metamorphosed this stark tragedy of love into a rich, elaborate romance of sweet sorrow, placing the emphasis upon sensuous atmosphere and sentimental emotions.

(*The Pot of Basil* represents both a retrogression and an advancement in Keats's poetic style. It is shot through and through with

<sup>14</sup> H. W. Garrod, *Keats*, Oxford, 1926, p. 46.

sentimentality, it has a great deal of artificial rhetoric, and it has one or two passages of flat triviality. It is the short metrical romance which Hunt developed to take the place of the long metrical romance of Ariosto, Tasso, and Spenser -- the type of romance which Hunt wrote in *The Story of Rimini* and which Keats attempted to write in *Calidore*. The genre itself has no inherent defects. *The Eve of St. Agnes*, *The Eve of St. Mark*, and *Lamia*, which are short metrical romances, are almost perfect poems. In *The Pot of Basil*, however, Keats reverted unfortunately to Hunt's "poetic luxury" or sensuous sentimentality.

It is difficult to account for Keats's reversion to sentimentality. In the letters which he wrote Reynolds in this period, we have seen, he insisted that they must free themselves from sentimentality. On February 3, we remember, he found fault with "tender and true," a phrase in Reynolds' sonnet on Robin Hood, "the more because," he said, "I have had so much reason to shun it as a quicksand." "We must cut this," he added, "and not be rattlesnaked into any more of the like." In his sojourn in Teignmouth, also, he read and relished Sheridan's satire on sentimentality. "This devonshire," he wrote Reynolds on March 14, "is like Lydia Languish, very entertaining when at smiles, but cursedly subject to sympathetic moisture."

In September 1819, when he was composing and revising his later romances, Keats himself admitted the sentimentality of *The Pot of Basil* and censured it in harsh terms. This censure we shall consider in our study of the period to which it belongs. *The Pot of Basil* was highly regarded, however, by many of Keats's friends, such as Woodhouse, Taylor, Reynolds, and Severn, who were sentimental by nature and by education. In August 1819 Woodhouse copied the romance for Taylor, who was intending to publish another volume of Keats's poems.

I bethought me on Saturday [Woodhouse wrote Taylor] of my promise about "Isabella" and took the earliest opportunity (as there was a lady in the case) of inquiring whether you had left out the Book in which she was to be copied; but without the least idea that you had done so. However, William found it, and I have copied the Basil Pot in it & given it (but this is a prophecy — a narrative preceding the fact — as Sir Philo says,— I *mean* to give it) to Hessey along with this letter to forward to you — and if the parcel sho<sup>d</sup> be made up, why it will go in the next. — Recollect that this is the 4th time I have written it over, recollect also that I could say it by heart with about 5 promptings; and if, as really was the case, I went through it with more pleasure than ever, one of two conclusions is inevitable: either that it is a noble poem, or that my judgment is not worth the tythe of a fig. And I am quite content to be set down for a

dolt in the opinion of that man who should deny the first of the above alternatives. May those to whom you shew the poem derive as much gratification from it as I did. [Woodhouse's Scrap-book.]

Charles Lamb, who reviewed Keats's *Poems* of 1820 in *The New Times* for July 19, 1820, preferred *The Pot of Basil* to *The Eve of St. Agnes*, *Lamia*, *Hyperion*, and the odes.

The finest thing in the volume [Lamb said] is the paraphrase of Boccaccio's story of the Pot of Basil. . . . [After interpreting *The Pot of Basil* as a poem of feeling and *Lamia* as a poem of fancy, he concluded:] To us an ounce of feeling is worth a pound of fancy; and therefore we recur again, with a warmer gratitude, to the story of Isabella and the Pot of Basil, and those never-cloying stanzas which we have cited, and which we think should disarm criticism, if it be not in its nature cruel; if it would not deny to honey its sweetness, nor to roses redness, nor light to the stars in Heaven; if it would not bay the moon out of the skies, rather than acknowledge she is fair.

Aside from its sentimentality, *The Pot of Basil* represents a growth in Keats's imagination and in his poetic technique. The description of Isabella's vision of Lorenzo's ghost is one of the purple patches of the romance. In Lorenzo's speech Keats presented most imaginatively the reactions of the ghost to the world of humanity which he has left.

I am a shadow now, alas! alas!  
 Upon the skirts of human-nature dwelling  
 Alone: I chant alone the holy mass,  
 While little sounds of life are round me knelling,  
 And glossy bees at noon do fieldward pass,  
 And many a chapel bell the hour is telling,  
 Paining me through: those sounds grow strange to me,  
 And thou art distant in Humanity.

The state of departed souls which this speech suggests is more Greek than Christian. It reminds one of the thin, shadowy existence of those souls whom Odysseus called up out of Hades. Lorenzo's ghost "dissolv'd, and left The atom darkness in a slow turmoil,"

As when of healthful midnight sleep bereft,  
 Thinking on rugged hours and fruitless toil,  
 We put our eyes into a pillowy cleft,  
 And see the spangly gloom froth up and boil. . . .

F. S. Storr told de Sélincourt<sup>15</sup> that "Browning . . . discussing the relations of Tennyson to Keats . . . quoted these lines as an instance of Keats's supreme mastery of language. . . ." "They have to me an additional pathos," Browning said, "because they record a personal experience. It is what Keats, poor fellow, must

<sup>15</sup> Ernest de Sélincourt, p. 463.

himself have seen many a night in the early stages of consumption!" "I cannot vouch," Storr said, "for the exact words, as I made no note of them at the time, but I can still hear Browning's delivery of 'and see the spangly gloom froth up and boil.'" These verses do not express personal experience, however, for the only symptom of consumption which Keats had suffered at this time was a slight sore throat

The three stanzas which Lamb selected as the finest in the romance are those in which Keats described Isabella's digging up the body of her murdered and buried lover, "than which," Lamb said, "there is nothing more awfully simple in diction, more nakedly grand and moving in sentiment, in Dante, in Chaucer, or in Spenser."

## XLVI.

She gaz'd into the fresh-thrown mould, as though  
 One glance did fully all its secrets tell;  
 Clearly she saw, as other eyes would know  
 Pale limbs at bottom of a crystal well;  
 Upon the murderous spot she seem'd to grow,  
 Like to a native lily of the dell:  
 Then with her knife, all sudden, she began  
 To dig more fervently than misers can.

## XLVII.

Soon she turn'd up a soiled glove, whereon  
 Her silk had play'd in purple phantasies,  
 She kiss'd it with a lip more chill than stone,  
 And put it in her bosom, where it dries  
 And freezes utterly unto the bone  
 Those dainties made to still an infant's cries  
 Then 'gan she work again; nor stay'd her care,  
 But to throw back at times her veiling hair.

## XLVIII.

That old nurse stood beside her wondering,  
 Until her heart felt pity to the core  
 At sight of such a dismal labouring,  
 And so she kneeled, with her locks all hoar,  
 And put her lean hands to the horrid thing:  
 Three hours they labour'd at this travail sore;  
 At last they felt the kernel of the grave,  
 And Isabella did not stamp and rave.

Keats presented this incident vividly and sincerely. He gave Isabella the feelings and the fancies which an imaginative, emotional girl would experience in such a situation. When she sees the "fresh-

thrown mould" of the grave, she realizes, as Sir Sidney Colvin<sup>16</sup> observed, the truth of the ghost's revelations; and her imagination, excited by grief and horror, pierces through the soil and sees the pale limbs of her murdered lover. This sight, presented by her imagination, arouses in her a passionate, possessive longing for her lover's body, and she digs more fervently than a miser digs for gold. The horror of the scene is softened by images of beauty such as the comparison of Isabella to the "lily of the dell." In the second stanza the glove which she digs up, kisses, and places in her bosom freezes her breasts utterly unto the bone, symbolizing the extent of her loss: the lover that was and the children that might have been.

The intense emotional effect of this incident is weakened, however, by inharmonious elements. The last verse of the third stanza,

And Isabella did not stamp and rave,

shatters (for me at least) the emotional tone of the scene. Another verse,

Those dainties made to still an infant's cries,

is, as Miss Lowell observed, infelicitous in the context. "Dainties" for "breasts" is a vulgar word in a description of the horrible reality of death. It is inappropriate also with reference to the relationship of mother and child. Keats derived this word from Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (II. 269-70), in which it is employed appropriately as the amorous fancy of a thriving wooer:

Yet euer as he greedily assayd  
To touch those dainties, she the Harpey playd. . . .

The vivid, morbid realism which pervades the description of the digging up of Lorenzo's body sprang out of Keats's own imaginative brooding over the "wormy circumstance" of graves.

Who hath not loiter'd in a green church-yard,  
And let his spirit, like a demon-mole,  
Work through the clayey soil and gravel hard,  
To see scull, coffin'd bones, and funeral stole;  
Pitying each form that hungry Death hath marr'd,  
And filling it once more with human soul?

Keats amplified Boccaccio's simple, direct story with four long digressions in the manner in which Hunt had amplified Dante's story of Paolo and Francesca. The first digression, a protest against shedding tears for lovers' tragedies, reflects Hunt's principle that a

<sup>16</sup> Sir Sidney Colvin, pp. 392-395. Colvin has written the most sympathetic appreciation of the romance

poet should relate a painful story in a sweet and pleasant form. The second digression, a rebuke of the pride and avarice of Isabella's brothers, who were merchants, was suggested by Dryden's rebuke of the Dutch merchants in *Annus Mirabilis* —

For them alone the heav'ns had kindly heat;  
     In eastern quarries ripening precious dew.  
 For them the Idumæan balm did sweat,  
     And in hot Ceylon spicy forests grew.

The third digression is an invocation of Boccaccio and a tribute to him. The fourth digression, a complaint to Melancholy, Music, and Echo, reminds us of complaints in Chaucer's *Nun's Priest's Tale* and Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece*. These invocations and complaints are conventions of the mediaeval metrical romance, and so they are appropriate in *The Pot of Basil*. Neither Shakespeare nor Keats overcame the artificiality which is inherent in these conventions. Chaucer, perceiving their artificiality, employed them to produce a humorous effect. Keats's invocation of Boccaccio is felicitous, but his rebuke of the pride and avarice of Isabella's brothers grows shrill and hysterical, and his invocation of Melancholy is rhetorical and artificial.

*The Pot of Basil* represents a distinct advancement in diction and metre. There are a few rhetorical and bombastic phrases, but there is scarcely a trace of low diction, colloquial idiom, and license in diction and grammar. Like his Renaissance masters, he employed what the Greek rhetoricians would call the elegant style. He coined many fine phrases and ingenious figures of speech. "The anticipation of the assassination," Lamb said, "is wonderfully conceived in one epithet"—

/ So the two brothers and *their murder'd man*  
 / Rode past fair Florence. . . .

The following verses have a Miltonic type of phrasing —

With duller steel than the Perséan sword  
 They cut away no formless monster's head. . . .

Keats formed concentrated compounds such as "once proud-quiver'd loins" (that is, loins which once proudly bore quivers); and he employed the archaic word "leafits" for "leaflets," borrowing it perhaps from Coleridge's *Nightingale*. The chief fault in his diction is the large number of sweet and luscious words. Some phrases, such as "a young palmer in Love's eye," are both sentimental and artificial.

Keats wrote *The Pot of Basil* in the ottava rima of the Italian poets and their sixteenth-century English translators and imitators. Hookham Frere and Byron had recently revived this measure, but Keats was influenced in his management of it by Fairfax, the late sixteenth-century translator of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*. He had read Fairfax's translation, we remember, with Clarke in Enfield and Edmonton. He attained in this measure a fine balance between variety and uniformity. He had learned a great deal about metrical technique, I believe, from Dryden's poems, which he had begun to study in December 1817.

(*The Pot of Basil* is, in short, a transitional poem. In its sentimentality, it turns backward into the past and in its imaginative realism, in its elegant, artificial diction, and in its flexible but vigorous metre, it moves forward into the future. And in its genre, the short romance, it is a link between *Calidore* and *The Eve of St. Agnes*.)

## 4

The lyric poems and the letters which Keats wrote in Teignmouth reflect his personal experience and reveal the effect of his experience upon his philosophy of poetry. He left London, it is probable, on Tuesday, March 3 and arrived in Teignmouth on Wednesday, March 4. On March 6, we have seen, Hessey wrote Taylor that Keats left London "on the night of the storm on the *outside* of the coach." Keats described his arrival in Teignmouth in a letter to Reynolds dated "Saturday" (that is, Saturday, March 14):

I escaped being blown over and blown under and trees and house being toppled on me. . . . Being agog to see some Devonshire, I would have taken a walk the first day, but the rain wo<sup>d</sup> not let me; and the second, but the rain wo<sup>d</sup> not let me; and the third, but the rain forbade it. Ditto 4 — ditto 5 — ditto — So I made up my Mind to stop in doors, and catch a sight flying between the showers: and behold I saw a pretty valley — pretty cliffs, pretty Brooks, pretty Meadows, pretty trees, both standing as they were created, and blown down as they are uncreated. . . . I wrote to Bailey yesterday. . . .

In the letter to Bailey, which is dated "Friday" (that is, Friday, March 13), Keats "blew up" the climate and the natives of Devonshire:

— by the by you may say what you will of devonshire: the truth is, it is a splashy, rainy, misty, snowy, foggy, haily, floody, muddy, slipshod County — the hills are very beautiful, when you get a sight of 'em — the Primroses are out, but then you are in — the Cliffs are of a fine deep Colour, — but then the Clouds are continually vieing with them. The Women like your London People in a sort of negative way — because the native men are the poorest creatures

in England. . . When I think of Wordsworth's Sonnet "Vanguard of Liberty! ye Men of Kent!" the degenerated race about me are Pulvis Ipecac. Simplex — a strong dose. . . There are knotted oaks — there are lusty rivulets there are Meadows such as are not [elsewhere?] — there are vallies of femminine Climate but there are no thews and sinews. . . Such a quelling Power have these thoughts over me that I fancy the very Air of a deteriorating quality -- I fancy the flowers, all precocious, have an Acrasian spell about them. . . I like [,] I love England. I like its living Men. Give me a long brown plain for my Morning so I may meet with some of Edmond Ironside's des[c]endants . . . Scenery is fine — but human nature is finer. The Sward is richer for the tread of a real, nervous english foot. . . I shall never be able to relish entirely any devonshire scenery — Homer is very fine, Achilles is fine, Diomed is fine, Shakespeare is fine, Hamlet is fine, Lear is fine, but dwindled englishmen are not fine — Where too the Women are so passable, and have such english names, such as Ophelia, Cordelia etc. . . O Devonshire last night I thought the Moon had dwindled in heaven.

In a letter to Haydon postmarked "March 23" and dated "Saturday Morn" (that is, Saturday morning, March 21), Keats said:

— the six first days I was here it did nothing but rain; and at that time having to write a friend I gave Devonshire a good blowing up -- it has been fine for almost three days, and I was coming round a bit; but to day it rains again — with me the County is yet upon its good behaviour I have enjoyed the most delightful Walks these three fine days beautiful enough to make me content here all the summer could I stay

For there's Bishop's teign  
And King's teign  
And Coomb at the clear teign head —  
Where close by the stream  
You may have your cream  
All spread upon barley bread. etc.

The date of this letter to Haydon is important, for it contains the song *The Devon Maid* as well as the *ex tempore* verses upon Teignmouth. M. B. Forman<sup>17</sup> dated the letter Saturday, March 14. He believed that Keats's enumeration of days in the passage quoted above proves that he had been in Teignmouth only ten days; and he dismissed the postmark of "March 23," a London one, on the assumption that the letter was either detained by Keats or delayed in the post. The days which Keats enumerated in sets of six rainy days, three fine days, and to-day (a rainy day) are not necessarily consecutive. A week clapsed, I believe, between the six rainy days and the three fine days. If Keats wrote Haydon on March 14 instead of March 21, he wrote him on the same day on which he wrote Reynolds. Now, in the letter to Reynolds he said that he wrote a

<sup>17</sup> H. B. Forman, Vol. I, p. 125.



letter to Bailey yesterday, the letter in which he "blew up" Devonshire weather. In the letter to Haydon, however, he referred to the letter in which he "gave Devonshire a good blowing up" as though he had written it several days before instead of the day before. I see no reason, therefore, to explain away the postmark of "March 23."

Keats complained of rainy weather throughout his sojourn in Teignmouth. Writing Reynolds on April 9, he said:

Devonshire continues rainy. As the drops beat against the window, they give me the same sensation as a quart of cold water offered to revive a half-drowned devil — No feel of the clouds dropping fatness; but as if the roots of the Earth were rotten cold and drench'd.

He found a sardonic pleasure in cursing the Devonshire weather to Haydon, Reynolds, and Rice, who were lovers of Devonshire. And Haydon replied aptly enough: "It has rained in Town almost incessantly ever since you went away, the fact is, you dog, you carried the rain with you as Ulysses did the Winds, and then opening your rain bags, you look round with a knowing wink and say 'curse this Devonshire, how it rains!'"

Rainy weather was not the only thing, however, which made Keats unhappy in Devonshire. He was disappointed by George Keats's absence and depressed by Tom's illness. He was embarrassed by a lack of money and was compelled, Woodhouse said, to borrow from his landlady. He missed also, in this provincial town, the stimulating association with friends and acquaintances in London. He formed a congenial friendship, however, with four ladies of Teignmouth who had been kind to George and Tom — Mrs. Margaret Jeffrey and her three daughters, Marianne, Fanny, and Sarah. Miss Lowell examined a letter which George Keats wrote to the Misses Jeffrey shortly after he had left Teignmouth. George, although engaged to Miss Wylie, had flirted mildly with "steady quiet Marianne and laughing thoughtless Sarah." In the letter, Miss Lowell said, "locks of hair are mentioned — treasured from one girl, demanded of the other — and kisses remembered." George was eager to know what the girls thought of his brother the poet:

How do you like John? is he not very original? he does not look by any means so handsome as four months ago, but is he not handsome? I am sure you must like him very much, but don't forget *me*. I suppose Tom gets more lively as his health improves. Tell me what you think of John.

Marianne Jeffrey, who became Mrs. I. S. Prowse, published a volume of poems in 1830 and in several of them alluded quite clearly

to Keats. According to local tradition, H. B. Forman reported, the lyric *Si deseris peregrino* was addressed to Keats on his departure from Teignmouth. The two letters which Keats wrote to Miss Jeffrey in May and June 1819, however, are the letters of a friend rather than those of one who had been even a casual lover.

During the first week of his residence in Teignmouth, while he was confined within doors by the rain, Keats copied the fourth book of *Endymion*, finishing the copy by March 14 and dispatching it to Taylor with a letter postmarked March 23. After he had completed this task, he resumed the composition of *The Pot of Basil* and began a series of lyric poems. He began also to write letters to his friends in London.

These letters and lyric poems reveal a bitter struggle in Keats's mind between the humanism of Shakespeare and Milton and Wordsworth's humanitarianism. For a while he remained dissatisfied with Wordsworth's philosophy. In March, Bailey, the disciple of Wordsworth, published a sermon in which he set forth his religious principles. On April 9 he wrote Taylor, the publisher:

Dilke wrote the article in the *Champion* about my Sermon. He intended it as a kindness; — but for the sake of the book, & I think, for his own, he had better have let it alone. He is at best a sceptic in his principles; — & it rather arises from too much [pride?] & too little knowledge, than any cause which can assume the shape of rational criticism.

[Woodhouse's Scrap-book.]

Keats liked Bailey but he was growing weary of his efforts to convert him to a belief in Christian humanitarianism. He read Gibbon and Voltaire in February, and his agnosticism verged upon scepticism. He wrote Bailey on March 13:

I have never had your Sermon from Wordsworth, but M<sup>rs</sup> Dilke lent it me. You know my ideas about Religion. I do not think myself more in the right than other people, and that nothing in this world is proveable. I wish I could enter into all your feelings on the subject merely for one short 10 Minutes and give you a Page or two to your liking. I am sometimes so very sceptical as to think Poetry itself a mere Jack a lantern to amuse whoever may chance to be struck with its brilliance. As Tradesmen say every thing is worth what it will fetch, so probably every mental pursuit takes its reality and worth from the ardour of the pursuer — being it itself a nothing — Ethereal thing[s] may at least be thus real, divided under three heads — Things real — things semireal — and nothings. Things real — such as existences of Sun, Moon, & Stars and passages of Shakespeare. Things semireal such as Love, the Clouds etc which require a greeting of the Spirit to make them wholly exist — and Nothings which are made Great and dignified by an ardent pursuit — which by the by stamp the burgundy mark on the bottles of our Minds, insomuch as they are able to "com-

sec[r]ate whate'er they look upon." I have written a Sonnet here of a somewhat collateral nature — so don't imagine it an a propos des bottes.

Four Seasons fill the Measure of the year;  
 Four Seasons are there in the mind of Man[:]  
 He hath his lusty spring when fancy clear  
 Takes in all beauty with an easy span:  
 He hath his Summer, when luxuriously  
 He chews the honied cud of fair spring thoughts,  
 Till, in his Soul dissolv'd they come to be  
 Part of himself. He hath his Autumn ports  
 And Havens of repose, when his tired wings  
 Are folded up, and he content to look  
 On Mists in idleness: to let fair things  
 Pass by unheeded as a threshold brook.  
 He hath his Winter too of pale Misfeature,  
 Or else he would forget his mortal nature.

The original letter to Bailey, containing this sonnet, is in the Lowell Collection in the Harvard College Library. There is a transcript of the sonnet in Woodhouse's *Book of Transcripts*. Woodhouse said that he "transcribed [it] from K's letter to B. B." but he dated it by mistake "Sept. 1818." A revised version of the sonnet was published in Hunt's *Literary Pocket-Book* for 1819.

The seasons of the year, representing the seasons of man's life, is one of the earliest symbols of human thought. Keats knew this symbol doubtless in Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* for December, Thomson's *Winter*, and Wordsworth's *Excursion* (V. 391 *et seq.*) Keats's sceptical survey of the season of man's life was suggested, I believe, by an argument in *The Excursion* between the Solitary, who was a sceptic, and the Wanderer and the Poet, who were Christians. The Solitary said:

. . . in the life of man  
 . . . we see as in a glass  
 A true reflection of the circling year  
 With all its seasons. Grant that Spring is there,  
 In spite of many a rough untoward blast,  
 Hopeful and promising with buds and flowers;  
 Yet where is glowing Summer's long rich day,  
 That ought to follow faithfully expressed?  
 And mellow Autumn, charged with bounteous fruit,  
 Where is she imaged? in what favoured clime  
 Her lavish pomp, and ripe magnificence?  
 — Yet, while the better part is missed, the worse  
 In Man's autumnal season is set forth  
 With a resemblance not to be denied,  
 And that contents him; bowers that hear no more

The voice of gladness, less and less supply  
 Of outward sunshine and internal warmth;  
 And, with this change, sharp air and falling leaves,  
 Foretelling aged Winter's dreary sway

The function of the Solitary in *The Excursion* was to state objections to religious faith in order that the Wanderer and the Poet could refute them. Keats, who was a sceptic, agreed with the arguments of the Solitary rather than with those of the Wanderer and the Poet. He knew, very likely, that Bailey, the ardent Wordsworthian, to whom he sent the sonnet, would connect it with its source in *The Excursion*. At the end of his letter to Bailey he betrayed impatience with Bailey's insistent propaganda of Christian humanitarianism.

Now my dear fellow I must once for all tell you I have not one Idea of the truth of any of my speculations - I shall never be a Reasoner because I care not to be in the right, when retired from bickering and in a proper philosophical temper.

In the sphere of religion, as well as in the spheres of friendship and poetry, Keats applied the philosophy of "negative capability" which he had developed from his study of Shakespeare. His agnosticism was another manifestation of the negatively capable character of his mind.

In the letter which he wrote Haydon on March 21, Keats revealed his dissatisfaction with Wordsworth, Hunt, and others, and his admiration for Hazlitt.

It has as yet been a Mystery to me how and where Wordsworth went. I can't help thinking he has returned to his Shell - with his beautiful Wife and his enchanting Sister. It is a great Pity that People should by associating themselves with the finest things, spoil them. Hunt has damned Hampstead a[nd] masks and sonnets and Italian tales. Wordsworth has damned the lakes - Milman has damned the old drama - West has damned - wholesale. Peacock has damned satire - Ollier has damn'd Music - Hazlitt has damned the bigoted and the blue-stockin[g]ed; how durst the Man?! he is your only good damner, and if ever I am damn'd - damn me if I shouldn't like him to damn me.

Keats's reference to Hunt's damning Italian tales is illuminating in consideration of the fact that he was composing *The Pot of Basil* at this time. He suffused this Italian tale with Hunt's sentimentality, it is probable, because he could not help associating Italian tales with Hunt. On March 25 Haydon replied to Keats's allusion to Wordsworth, Hazlitt, and Hunt.

I have heard nothing of Wordsworth ever since he went, which I take to be unkind. -- Hazlitt is going to lecture at Crown and Anchor. I am sorry for it, tho' he will get money, it is letting his talents down a little. -- What affec-

tation in Hunt's title — "Foliage!" — I met that horrid creature Miss Kent [Hunt's sister-in-law], looking like a fury and an old maid, mixed. —<sup>18</sup>

Keats found relief from the serious speculations which were obsessing his mind by composing a series of gay, wanton lyrics. He took the pastoral life of contemporary Devonshire, suffused it in the spontaneous, sportive spirit of sixteenth-century England, and molded it into the form of the Elizabethan lyric. In the letter to Haydon, March 21, he described in *ex tempore* verses the country around Teignmouth with its precocious spring flowers. The following stanza has a suggestion of Elizabethan lyrics:

And O, and O  
The daisies blow  
And the primroses are waken'd,  
And the violets white  
Sit in silver plight,  
And the green bud's as long as the spike end.

After copying these verses Keats said:

Here's some dogrel for you — Perhaps you would like a bit of B[itch]hrell:

✓ Where be ye going, you Devon Maid?  
✓ And what have ye there in the Basket?  
Ye tight little fairy just fresh from the dairy,  
Will ye give me some cream if I ask it?  
I love your Meads, and I love your flowers,  
And I love your junkets mainly,  
But 'hind the door I love kissing more,  
O look not so disdainly.  
I love your hills, and I love your dales,  
And I love your flocks a-bleating —  
But O, on the heather to lie together,  
With both our hearts a-beating!  
I'll put your Basket all safe in a nook,  
Your shawl I hang up on the willow,  
And we will sigh in the daisy's eye  
And kiss on a grass-green pillow.

I know not if this rhyming fit has done anything [Keats said] — it will be safe with you if worthy to put among my Lyrics.

Haydon replied on March 25:

Your bi[tch]hrell as you call it is beautiful and I take it as a great friendly kindness to remember me in that way — as often as you feel inclined to give vent remember I am always ready with pleasure to receive the result.

<sup>18</sup> F. W. Haydon, *Benjamin Robert Haydon: Correspondence and Table-Talk*, Vol. II, p. 10.

Keats derived the Elizabethan rhythm of this lyric partly through Chatterton. D. G. Rossetti suggested to H. B. Forman<sup>19</sup> that the first stanza has a reminiscence of a rhyme in a song in Chatterton's *Aella*:

Mie husbande, Lorde Thomas, a forrester boulde,  
As ever clove pynne, or *the baskette*,  
Does no cherysauncys from Elynour houlde,  
I have ytte as soone as *I aske ytte*.

Two or three days before Keats sent the lyric to Haydon, he dedicated *Endymion* to Chatterton.

Keats was attracted by Devon maids, who, he wrote Bailey, are passable and have such English names as Ophelia and Cordelia. He wrote Rice on March 24:

Some of the little Barmaids look'd at me as if I knew Jem Rice — but when I took [cherry?] Brandy they were quite convinced. One asked whether you preserved a secret she gave you on the nail — another how m[an]y buttons of your Coat were buttoned in general. — I [told] her it used to be four — . . . I have met with a Brace or twain of little Long heads — not a bit o' the german — all in the neatest little dresses, and avoiding all the puddles — but very fond of peppermint drops, laming ducks, and seeing little Girls affairs. Well I can't tell! . . . I went yesterday to dawlish fair —

Over the hill and over the dale,  
And over the bourn to Dawlish —  
Where Gingerbread Wives have a scanty sale  
And gingerbread nuts are smallish.

Rantipole Betty she ran down a hill  
And ki[c]k'd up her petticoats fairly  
Says I I'll be Jack if you will be Gill.  
So she sat on the Grass debonnairly.

Here's somebody coming, here's somebody coming!  
Says I 'tis the Wind at a parley  
So without any fuss any hawing and humming  
She lay on the grass debonnairly.

Here's somebody here and here's somebody there!  
Says I hold your tongue you young Gipsey.  
So she held her tongue and lay plump and fair  
And dead as a venus tipsy.

O who wouldn't hie to Dawlish fair  
O who wouldn't stop in a Meadow  
O [who] would not rumple the daisies there  
And make the wild fern for a bed do.

---

<sup>19</sup> H. B. Forman, *Variorum Edition*, Vol. II, pp. 210-211

In the latter part of March, I believe, Keats composed the *Daisy's Song*, which Woodhouse, we have seen, dated merely "1818." I quote the transcript in Woodhouse's Scrap-book.

*W* Daisy's Song.

I

The Sun with his great eye  
Sees not so much as I;  
And the moon, all silver proud,  
Might as well be in a cloud.

2

And O the Spring — the Spring!  
I lead the life of a king.  
Couch'd in the teeming grass,  
I spy each pretty lass.

3

I look where no one dares  
And I stare where no one stares;  
And when the night is nigh,  
Lambs bleat my lullaby.

1818

J. K.

In style and substance, the *Daisy's Song* belongs unquestionably in a group with *The Devon Maid* and *Dawlish Fair*. These three lyrics, together with the *ex tempore* verses on Teignmouth, have the setting of spring in Devonshire and they have in particular the precocious daisies which impressed Keats in his walks around Teignmouth. These four lyrics, together with *The stranger lighted from his steed*, which Keats composed in the latter part of February, have the simplicity, the spontaneity, and the disconnectedness of Elizabethan songs. These qualities induced D. G. Rossetti, H. B. Forman, de Sélincourt, and Miss Lowell to believe that the *Daisy's Song* and *The stranger lighted from his steed* were influenced by Blake's songs. We should remember, however, that Blake's poems were almost wholly unknown in the first quarter of the nineteenth century and that there is not a single reference to Blake in the voluminous records of Keats's life and poetry. It is safer to assume that Keats, like Blake, derived these qualities directly from Elizabethan songs.

The letter to Haydon, containing *The Devon Maid* and the stanzas on Teignmouth, was transcribed and printed by H. B. Forman from the original manuscript, probably in Haydon's Journal. The original letter to Rice, containing *Dawlish Fair*, is in the Lowell Collection

in the Harvard College Library; and there is a transcript of the song in Woodhouse's Scrap-book.

[These sportive songs, expressing superficial and transient moods, accentuate the unhappiness which was throbbing in Keats's heart. One week after he arrived in Teignmouth, his brother Tom suffered a hæmorrhage of the lungs. At the end of the letter which he wrote Bailey on March 13, he said with tragic brevity:

My Brother Tom desires to be remember'd to you - - he has just this moment had a spitting of blood poor fellow.

John and George were startled and perturbed by Tom's hæmorrhage, for they had believed that he was steadily improving. George thought that John had permitted Tom to "presume on his strength" (possibly by exposing himself in the rain). He wrote the poet on March 18:

I can hardly believe this melancholy news, having so long accustomed myself to think altogether otherwise -- I hope and trust that your *kind* superintendence will prevent any violent bleeding in future, and consequently that this alarm may prove in the end advantageous; Tom must never again presume on his strength, at all events until he has *completely* recover'd.

Keats's unhappy experience in Teignmouth unsettled his philosophy of negative capability and he began to long for a rational philosophy which would give him comfort in the midst of the ills of human life. He wrote Rice on March 24:

What a happy thing it would be if we could settle our thoughts, make our minds up on any matter in five Minutes and remain content -- that is to build a sort of mental Cottage of feelings quiet and pleasant - - to have a sort of Philosophical Back Garden, and cheerful holiday-keeping front one -- but Alas! this never can be: for as the material Cottager knows there are such places as France and Italy and the Andes and the Burning Mountains -- so the spiritual Cottager has knowledge of the terra semi incognita of things unearthly; and cannot for his Life, keep in the check rein.

(The scepticism which Keats expressed in the sonnet on the four seasons of man's life on March 13 developed into pessimism. On March 25 he wrote a poetic epistle to Reynolds in which he probed searchingly into the problem of human happiness.

Dear Reynolds, as last night I lay in bed,  
There came before my eyes that wonted thread  
Of Shapes, and Shadows and Remembrances,  
That every other minute vex and please. . . .

The disjointed shapes which his imagination paraded before his eyes -- two witch's eyes above a cherub's mouth, a hellish nose



peeping through the curtains, wild boar tusches, mermaid's toes, etc. — remind us of the contradictory things which he had described in *Welcome joy, and welcome sorrow* and *The Castle Builder*. In January, when he was in a happy state of mind, these disjointed shapes had been pleasant but now, when he was unhappy, they were painful

The few men who escape these ugly and horrible visitings, he said, are those who see nature in a calm and beneficent aspect —

Some, Titian colours touch'd into real life.—  
The sacrifice goes on; the pontif knife  
Gleams in the sun, the milk-white heifer lows,  
The pipes go shrilly, the libation flows:  
A white sail shews above the green-head cliff  
Moves round the point, and throws her anchor stiff.  
The Mariners join hymn with those on land. —

“There exists no such picture of a sacrifice by Titian,” Sir Sidney Colvin<sup>20</sup> said, “and what Keats was thinking of, I feel sure, was the noble *Sacrifice to Apollo* by Claude from the Leigh Court collection, which he had seen at the British Institution in 1816 (hung, as it happened, next to Titian's *Europa* from Cobham Hall). . . .”

And then to amuse and to comfort Reynolds, who lay sick and despondent, Keats described Claude's *Enchanted Castle*, a representation of nature in a beautiful, magical, and beneficent aspect.

You know the Enchanted Castle[,—] it doth stand  
Upon a Rock on the Border of a Lake  
Nested in Trees, which all do seem to shake  
From some old Magic like Urganda's Sword.

I refrain from quoting this description, which is vivid but long. Keats was not in sympathy with the representation of nature in Claude's *Enchanted Castle*. To him, in his present unhappy state of mind, nature seemed malignant instead of beneficent.

✓ O that our dreamings all of sleep or wake  
Would all their colours from the sunset take:  
From something of material sublime,  
Rather than shadow our own Soul's daytime  
In the dark void of Night. For in the world  
We jostle — but my flag is not unfurl'd  
On the Admiral staff, — and to philosophize  
I dare not yet! — Oh never will the prize,  
High reason, and the lore of good and ill  
Be my award. Things cannot to the will

<sup>20</sup> Sir Sidney Colvin, p. 264

Be settled, but they tease us out of thought.  
 Or is it that Imagination brought  
 Beyond its proper bound, yet still confined, —  
 Lost in a sort of Purgatory blind, —  
 Cannot refer to any standard law  
 Of either earth or heaven? — It is a flaw  
 In happiness to see beyond our bourn —  
 It forces us in Summer skies to mourn:  
 It spoils the singing of the Nightingale.

(Keats had come to a crisis in the evolution of his thought. He tested his philosophy of negative capability by the experience of pain and grief and, for the moment, found it wanting. He tested Wordsworth's Christian and humanitarian naturalism likewise, and he longed for the comfort which it offered but could not as yet accept it.

(He had believed, we remember, that men intuit truth by a process of imagination; that the imagination intuits truth in the form of beauty; and that the beauty of intuitive truth obliterates consciousness of the disagreeables of life. Men cannot possess continual and perpetual happiness, he thought, but they can attain moments of happiness in their intuitions of beauty. A vision of beauty, he said, could lift the pall of unhappiness from his spirit.) But as he sat in his lonely room in Teignmouth, watching his brother suffering from the ravages of consumption, while the rain beat incessantly upon the window panes, he found no consolation in his philosophy of negative capability. His imagination, he discovered, gave him an insight into the malignant forces of nature. The disagreeables which his imagination intuited remained disagreeable in spite of the beauty of the form in which they were intuited. The imagination, he decided, was incapable of giving him comfort in his unhappiness. It could pierce into the world of the spirit, but when it had left the world of matter it was lost in a sort of purgatory blind, unable to refer its intuitions to the laws of either heaven or earth. He thought of reason as a principle by which he might reconcile the intuitions of his imagination. He had defined Wordsworth's mind, we remember, as a mind that was both imaginative and rational. He could not accept as yet, however, the rational principles of Wordsworth's philosophy. He could not draw soothing thoughts out of suffering. He could not resolve present evil into ultimate good.

Oh never will the prize,  
 High reason, and the lore of good and ill  
 Be my award!

he exclaimed in despair.

As Keats wrote his epistle to Reynolds, he was thinking, I believe, of the *Elegiac Stanzas* which Wordsworth wrote in memory of his brother Christopher, who had been drowned at sea. In each of these poems the poet describes a painting and tests the representation of nature in the painting by his grief for a brother. The two poems correspond in every respect except in their philosophic conclusions. Wordsworth's elegy was suggested by Sir George Beaumont's picture of Peele Castle in a storm. He had once lived apart from men, Wordsworth said, housed in a dream of the steadfast beneficence of nature. One summer he had been a neighbor of Peele Castle. It had stood beside a calm sea, on tranquil land, beneath a sky of bliss. He had objected, therefore, to Beaumont's picture of the castle in a storm. The death of his brother at sea disturbed his illusion of the universal beneficence of nature and humanized his soul. In the wisdom which suffering taught him, he recognized the truth in Beaumont's picture of the sea in anger. In the huge castle which braved the lightning, the fierce wind, and the trampling waves he saw, however, a symbol of fortitude and hope. In the midst of present evil he saw ultimate good.

Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

Keats brought his poem to an end on a note of despair instead of hope. With that penetrating insight which startles us, he saw nature as red in tooth and claw as Tennyson and other poets of the Darwinian era have seen it.

Dear Reynolds. I have a mysterious tale  
And cannot speak it. The first page I read  
Upon a Lampit Rock of green sea weed  
Among the breakers. 'Twas a quiet Eve;  
The rocks were silent — the wide sea did weave  
An untumultuous fringe of silver foam  
Along the flat brown sand. I was at home,  
And should have been most happy — but I saw  
Too far into the sea; where every maw  
The greater on the less feeds evermore: —  
But I saw too distinct into the core  
Of an eternal fierce destruction,  
And so from Happiness I far was gone.  
Still am I sick of it: and though to-day  
I've gathered young spring-leaves, and flowers gay  
Of periwinkle and wild strawberry,  
Still do I that most fierce destruction see,  
The Shark at savage prey — the hawk at pounce,  
The gentle Robin, like a pard or ounce,  
Ravening a worm. . . .

Keats remained in this state of pessimism for a month. He wrote Taylor on April 24:

— young Men for some time have an idea that such a thing as happiness is to be had and therefore are extremely impatient under any unpleasant restraining — in time however, of such stuff is the world about them, they know better and instead of striving from Uneasiness greet it as an habitual sensation, a pannier which is to weigh upon them through life.

In this letter, however, Keats was beginning to take refuge in Wordsworth's humanitarianism.

The matter of the preface to *Endymion* came up in the first part of April. On March 21 Keats wrote Taylor that he was sending him the copy of the fourth book of *Endymion* and the preface and dedication to the romance. His friends were perturbed by the preface and wrote him, through Reynolds, that it was written in Hunt's affected manner and that it would make a bad impression upon the public. He replied to Reynolds on April 9:

Since you all agree that the thing is bad, it must be so — though I am not aware there is anything like Hunt in it, (and if there is, it is my natural way, and I have something in common with Hunt) look it over again and examine into the motives, the seeds from which any one sentence sprung — I have not the slightest feel of humility towards the Public — or to anything in existence, — but the eternal Being, the Principle of Beauty, and the Memory of great Men. When I am writing for myself for the mere sake of the Moment's enjoyment, perhaps nature has its course with me — but a Preface is written to the Public; a thing I cannot help looking upon as an Enemy, and which I cannot address without feelings of Hostility. . . I see swarms of Porcupines with their Quills erect "like limetwigs set to catch my Winged Book" and I would fright 'em away with a torch . . . if there is any fault in the preface it is not affectation, but an undersong of disrespect to the Public — if I write another preface it must be done without a thought of those people — I will think about it. If it should not reach you in four — or five days — tell Taylor to publish it without a preface, and let the dedication simply stand "inscribed to the Memory of Thomas Chatterton."

Keats wrote a second preface and sent it to Reynolds the next day, April 10.

I am anxious you sho<sup>d</sup> find this Preface tolerable [he said]. If there is an affectation in it, 'tis natural to me. Do let the Printer's Devil cook it, and let me be as "the casing air." . . . I had an idea of giving no Preface; however, don't you think this had better go? O, let it — one should not be too timid — of committing faults.

The first preface, as Keats insisted, is not affected but is a nervous confession of his dissatisfaction with the romance and an uneasy

expression of his defiance of anticipated criticism. The second preface, which he promised to write without a thought of the public, is simple and natural, but the naïveté which appeals to posterity laid it open to ridicule by contemporary reviewers.

Keats composed a few lyrics in the latter part of April 1818. Woodhouse copied into his Book of Transcripts a sonnet which Keats addressed *To J. R.*—that is, "To James Rice." Lord Houghton, who published the sonnet in 1848 from (it is probable) Woodhouse's transcript, misinterpreted "J. R." as "John Hamilton Reynolds." Woodhouse did not give the date of the sonnet; but Miss Lowell<sup>21</sup> was enabled to establish the date by the fortunate discovery of a copy of an old romance which Rice gave to Keats—a copy of the third edition of the English translation of the Spanish romance *Guzman de Alfarache*. Miss Lowell discovered this volume among the books bequeathed by Richard Henry Stoddard to the New York Authors Club. On the top margin of the first page Rice wrote:

John Keats. From his Friend J<sup>s</sup> Rxxx 20<sup>th</sup> April 1818.

And on the top margin of the dedication page he wrote:

Purchased by me A. D. 1818 — and given to John Keats and upon his death 1821 — returned to me. Rice

Since Keats was in Teignmouth on Monday, April 20, Rice must either have sent the copy of *Guzman de Alfarache* to him by coach parcel or have given it to him in the course of a visit in Devonshire. The hypothesis that Rice visited Keats in Devonshire corresponds perfectly with the substance of the sonnet *To J. R.*, in which Keats expressed his pleasure in receiving a visit from Rice. It is evident from the sonnet that Keats had not seen him for some time; and his intense delight in Rice's visit points to his lonely sojourn in Teignmouth as the date of the visit. Describing the bliss of an unending series of meetings and partings each week, the flush of welcome ever on the cheek, Keats said:

This morn, my friend, and yester-evening taught  
Me how to harbour such a happy thought.

Rice arrived one evening, it seems, and departed the next morning, and Keats composed the sonnet on the morning on which Rice departed. Monday, April 20, the day on which Rice gave the copy of *Guzman de Alfarache* to Keats, establishes the date of this visit and therefore the date of the sonnet as either April 20 or April 21.

<sup>21</sup> Amy Lowell, Vol. I, pp. 615-618.

Lord Houghton published the *Faery Songs* in 1848 in his *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats*; and he inserted a facsimile of the first song, "Shed no tear — O shed no tear!" as a frontispiece to the second volume. It is usually thought that Keats composed these songs in Hampstead in February 1818; but the setting "this fair haunt of spring" convinces me that he composed them in Teignmouth at the end of April 1818. The sadness which he kept out of the earlier lyrics which he composed in Teignmouth permeates these songs.

In the first part of April, Keats accepted Brown's invitation to go with him on a walking tour through the northern part of England and into Scotland. He wrote Haydon on April 8:

I purpose within a month to put my knapsack at my back and make a pedestrian tour through the North of England, and part of Scotland — to make a sort of Prologue to the Life I intend to pursue — that is to write, to study and to see all Europe at the lowest expence. I will clamber through the Clouds and exist. I will get such an accumulation of stupendous recollections that as I walk through the suburbs of London I may not see them . . .

(This announcement of the new kind of life he intended to pursue, a life of studying, travelling, and writing, gives us a slight intimation that he was coming under the influence of Wordsworth's philosophy. The idea of filling his memory with images of natural beauty was a principle of Wordsworth's naturalism, and the idea of acquiring knowledge by studying and travelling, we shall see presently, was a principle of Wordsworth's humanitarianism.)

Keats expressed his acceptance of Wordsworth's humanitarianism in the letter which he wrote Taylor on April 24 and the letters which he wrote Reynolds on April 27 and May 3. He derived the principles of humanitarianism from Wordsworth's *Excursion*, which he regarded as one of the three things to rejoice at in his age.

(In *The Excursion* the Solitary, who is a sceptic, and the Poet, the Wanderer, and the Parson, who are humanitarian Christians, discuss the following questions (V. 465 *et seq.*): Is man a child of hope? Is there progress from generation to generation? Does good or evil preponderate in man's nature? Does the will acknowledge reason's law? Is virtue a living power? Can man attain happiness? The Wanderer, who is Wordsworth's spokesman, guides the discourse and sums up the conclusions. In these conclusions we detect principles of Platonism, Hartley's empiricism, Rousseau's naturalism, and Godwin's rational humanitarianism.

The Wanderer asserts that an active principle of love pervades the universe, its noblest seat being in the human soul.

W To every Form of being is assigned . . .  
 An *active* Principle: — howe'er removed  
 From sense and observation, it subsists  
 In all things, in all natures; in the stars  
 Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds,  
 In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone  
 That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,  
 The moving waters, and the invisible air  
 . . . [and] in the human Mind,  
 Its most apparent home. . . . [IX. 1 *et seq*]

(Men who commune with the forms of nature will feel the joy of that pure principle, which animates all things; and by contemplating the forms of nature they will become wise and compassionate:

. . . the time will come  
 When they shall meet no object but may teach  
 Some acceptable lesson to their minds  
 Of human suffering, or of human joy. . . .  
 [IV. 1235 *et seq*]

So shall they acquire

The ability to spread the blessings wide  
 Of true philanthropy. . . .

The light of love not failing, they shall form the glorious habit of making sense subservient to moral purpose.

. . . That change shall clothe  
 The naked spirit, ceasing to deplore  
 The burthen of existence. . . .)

All men possess the same instincts. The differences which exist between men are caused by men themselves. If we consider this true equality of men, we have reason for gratitude and hope. Men are gradually progressing in knowledge and wisdom; and in some future time, through universal education, both the evil in men and the evil in society will be expelled.

O for the coming of that glorious time  
 When, prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth  
 And best protection, this imperial Realm,  
 While she exacts allegiance, shall admit  
 An obligation, on her part, to *teach*  
 Them who are born to serve her and obey;  
 . . . so that none,  
 However destitute, be left to droop  
 By timely culture unsustained. . . .  
 And, if that ignorance were removed, which acts  
 To breed commotion and disquietude . . .  
 So shall licentiousness and black resolve

Be rooted out, and virtuous habits take  
 Their place; and genuine piety descend,  
 Like an inheritance, from age to age. . . .  
 Change wide and deep, and silently performed,  
 This land shall witness, and as days roll on,  
 Earth's universal frame shall feel the effect,  
 Even till the smallest habitable rock,  
 Beaten by lonely billows, hear the songs  
 Of humanised society; and bloom  
 With civil arts, and send their fragrance forth,  
 A grateful tribute to all-ruling Heaven [IX. 293 *et seq.*]

In these humanitarian principles — universal philanthropy, the perfectibility of human nature, and the progress of society through education — Keats thought he had found a solution for the problems of his experience. In the poetic epistle to Reynolds, we remember, his imaginative insight into the destructive forces of nature had caused him to distrust the adequacy of the imagination. Now he discovered, he thought, in knowledge and in reason the faculty of knowledge, the principles by which he might control his imagination and reconcile his intuitions or apprehensions of evil. He wrote Reynolds on May 3:

Every department of Knowledge we see excellent and calculated towards a great whole. I am so convinced of this, that I am glad at not having given away my medical Books, which I shall again look over to keep alive the little I know thitherwards; and moreover intend through you and Rice [who were lawyers] to become a sort of pip-civilian. (An extensive knowledge is needful to thinking people — it takes away the heat and fever; and helps, by widening speculation, to ease the Burden of the Mystery: a thing I begin to understand a little, and which weighed upon you in the most gloomy and true sentence in your Letter. The difference of high Sensations with and without knowledge appears to me this: in the latter case we are falling continually ten thousand fathoms deep and being blown up again without wings and with all [the] horror of a bare shoulderd creature — in the former case, our shoulders are fledge, and we go thro' the same air and space without fear) This is running one's rigs on the score of abstracted benefit — when we come to human Life and the affections, it is impossible [to know] how a parallel of breast and head can be drawn. (You will forgive me for thus privately treading out [of] my depth, and take it for treading as schoolboys tread the water) It is impossible to know how far Knowledge will console us for the death of a friend and the ill "that flesh is heir to."

Keats began at once to make plans for increasing his knowledge; for he thought that knowledge would enable him to assist his fellow men as well as to solve his own experience of evil. In the letter to Taylor, April 24, he said:

I was purposing to travel over the north this Summer — there is but one thing to prevent me — I know nothing I have read nothing and I mean to follow



Solomon's directions of "get Wisdom — get understanding" — I find cavalier days are gone by. I find that I can have no enjoyment in the World but continual drinking of Knowledge — I find there is no worthy pursuit but the idea of doing some good for the world — some do it with their society — some with their wit — some with their benevolence — some with a sort of power of conferring pleasure and good humour on all they meet and in a thousand ways all equally dutiful to the command of Great Nature — there is but one way for me — the road lies through application study and thought. I will pursue it and to that end purpose retiring for some years. I have been hovering for some time between an exquisite sense of the luxurious and a love for Philosophy — were I calculated for the former I should be glad — but as I am not I shall turn all my soul to the latter.

Thinking that he might have to remain for some months with Tom in Devonshire, Keats wrote Reynolds on April 27:

I have written to George for some Books — shall learn Greek, and very likely Italian — and in other ways prepare myself to ask Hazlitt in about a years time the best metaphysical road I can take For although I take Poetry to be Chief, yet there is something else wanting to one who passes his life among Books and thoughts on Books. . . .

Keats discussed Wordsworth's philosophy with Reynolds, who was threading the same labyrinth of speculation. In the letter to Reynolds on May 3 he compared Wordsworth with Milton:

whether Miltons apparently less anxiety for Humanity proceeds from his seeing further or no than Wordsworth: And whether Wordsworth has in truth epic passion, and martyrs himself to the human heart, the main region of his song. In regard to his genius alone — we find what he says true as far as we have experienced and we can judge no further but by larger experience — for axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses We read fine things, but never feel them to the full until we have gone the same steps as the Author. — I know this is not plain, you will know exactly my meaning when I say, that now I shall relish Hamlet more than I ever have done — Or better — You are sensible no man can set down Venery as a bestial or joyless thing until he is sick of it and therefore all philosophizing on it would be mere wording. Until we are sick, we understand not; in fine, as Byron says, "Knowledge is Sorrow"; and I go on to say that "Sorrow is Wisdom" — and further for aught we can know for certainty "Wisdom is folly." . . .

After a digression Keats returned to his consideration of Wordsworth's sympathetic insight into the human heart. In Tintern Abbey Wordsworth defined three periods in the growth of his mind in relation to nature: childhood, the age of sensation, in which he sought nature for the "coarser pleasures of his boyish days," such as hunting, fishing, and swimming; youth, the age of feeling, in which he loved nature for impressions of beauty; and maturity, the age of

thought, in which he found in nature an inspiration to love humanity and to love God. Keats thought that he and Reynolds were passing through the same stages through which Wordsworth had passed.

(I will return to Wordsworth — whether or no he has an extended vision or a circumscribed grandeur — whether he is an eagle in his nest, or on the wing And to be more explicit and to show you how tall I stand by the giant, I will put down a simile of human life as far as I now perceive it; that is, to the point to which I say we both have arrived at Well — I compare human life to a large Mansion of Many Apartments, two of which I can only describe, the doors of the rest being as yet shut upon me. The first we step into we call the infant or thoughtless Chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think. We remain there a long while, and notwithstanding the doors of the second Chamber remain wide open, showing a bright appearance, we care not to hasten to it; but are at length imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of the thinking principle within us — we no sooner get into the second Chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of Maiden-Thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delight. However among the effects this breathing is father of is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of Man — of convincing one's nerves that the world is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and oppression — whereby this Chamber of Maiden Thought becomes gradually darken'd and at the same time on all sides of it many doors are set open — but all dark — all leading to dark passages. We see not the ballance of good and evil. We are in a Mist. We are now in that state — We feel the "burden of the Mystery." To this point was Wordsworth come, as far as I can conceive when he wrote "Tintern Abbey" and it seems to me that his Genius is explorative of those dark Passages. Now if we live, and go on thinking, we too shall explore them. He is a Genius and superior [to] us, in so far as he can, more than we, make discoveries, and shed a light in them.)

Keats's unhappiness had made him understand Wordsworth's insight into the sufferings of humanity and his passion for alleviating them. He was now in the Chamber of Maiden Thought, in which he perceived that "the world is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and oppression." He could not yet, like Wordsworth, see the balance of good and evil; but, as far as he could judge by his own experience, Wordsworth's philosophy was true, and, he said, "we can judge no further but by larger experience." He thought, we may presume, that *The Excursion* represented Wordsworth's exploration of the dark passages which lead off from the Chamber of Maiden Thought. The humanitarian principles of *The Excursion* — that all men partake of an active principle of love which pervades the universe, that evil in men and in society is a product of ignorance, and that knowledge will expel evil out of men and out of society and bring about an age of happiness — these principles, which he could not yet judge by his own experience, he received on faith.)

Keats decided that Wordsworth was a greater philosopher than Milton because he saw deeper into the nature of man.

Here I must think Wordsworth is deeper than Milton, though I think it has depended more upon the general and gregarious advance of intellect, than individual greatness of Mind. From the *Paradise Lost* and the other Works of Milton, I hope it is not too presuming, even between ourselves to say, that his Philosophy, human and divine, may be tolerably understood by one not much advanced in years. In his time englishmen were just emancipated from a great superstition, and Men had got hold of certain points and resting places in reasoning which were too newly born to be doubted, and too much opposed by the Mass of Europe not to be thought etherial and authentically divine — who could gainsay his ideas on virtue, vice, and Chastity in *Comus* just at the time of the dismissal of Cod-pieces and a hundred other disgraces? who would not rest satisfied with his hintings at good and evil in the *Paradise Lost*, when just free from the inquisition and burning in Smithfield? The Reformation produced such immediate and great benefits, that Protestantism was considered under the immediate eye of heaven, and its own remaining Dogmas and superstitions, then, as it were, regenerated, constituted those resting places and seeming sure points of Reasoning — from that I have mentioned, Milton, whatever he may have thought in the sequel, appears to have been content with these by his writings. He did not think into the human heart, as Wordsworth has done. Yet Milton as a Philosopher, had sure as great powers as Wordsworth. What is then to be inferr'd? O many things. It proves there is really a grand march of intellect, It proves that a mighty providence subdues the mightiest Minds to the service of the time being, whether it be in human Knowledge or Religion.

In this comparison of Wordsworth with Milton, we should observe, Keats accepted the idea of progress, an essential principle of humanitarianism.

(Keats would have explained his change in philosophy more significantly perhaps if he had compared Wordsworth's philosophy with Shakespeare's as well as with Milton's; for he derived most of the principles of the philosophy of negative capability, the philosophy which he was rejecting, from Shakespeare rather than from Milton.

The principle which he was chiefly rejecting, however, that of the imagination as the faculty which discovers truth, he had derived in part from Milton. If he had explained the change in his poetic style which accompanied the change in his philosophy, his comparison of Wordsworth with Milton would have been more pertinent. When he took Wordsworth instead of Milton for his poetic master, we shall see, he changed his intuition of *Hyperion*.)

It is unfortunate that Keats did not understand Milton's system of philosophy. If he had understood it, he would have found in *Paradise Lost* a more satisfactory explanation of the problem of good and evil than that which he found in Wordsworth's *Excursion*. Like everyone in his age, however, he regarded Milton as a simple and

dogmatic puritan, whose philosophy, as he said, "may be tolerably understood by one not much advanced in years."

The humanitarian principles which Keats associated with Wordsworth were developed philosophically in William Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*. I do not think that Keats read Godwin's abstract treatise; but, as an associate of Shelley, Hunt, Hazlitt, and Dilke, he heard discussion of Godwin's principles. He revealed a knowledge of them in the letter which he wrote to his brother George in October 1818. Discussing the political situation in Europe, he said:

Dilke, whom you know to be a Godwin perfectibil[ity] Man, pleases himself with the idea that America will be the country to take up the human intellect where England leaves off -- I differ there with him greatly

In his acceptance of Wordsworth's humanitarianism, however, Keats was influenced by Bailey, who had been exhorting him for six months to accept it.

The sonnet *To Homer* is the first poem which reveals Keats's new passion for knowledge. There is a transcript in Keats's copy of *Endymion*, entitled "Sonnet. - To Homer." and dated "1818." There are transcripts also with the same title and the same date in Woodhouse's Commonplace Book and Book of Transcripts.

Sonnet. - To Homer

Standing aloof in giant ignorance,  
Of thee I hear and of the Cyclades,  
As one who sits ashore and longs perchance  
To visit dolphin-coral in deep seas.  
So thou wast blind; -- but then the veil was rent,  
For Jove uncurtain'd Heaven to let thee live,  
And Neptune made for thee a spumy tent,  
And Pan made sing for thee his forest-hive;  
Aye on the shores of darkness there is light,  
And precipices show untrodden green,  
There is a budding morrow in midnight,  
There is a triple sight in blindness keen;  
Such seeing hadst thou, as it once befel  
To Dian, Queen of Earth, and Heaven, and Hell.<sup>21</sup>

1818.

D. G. Rossetti wrote H. B. Forman<sup>22</sup> that he thought that the verse "There is a budding morrow in midnight" is the finest single verse in Keats's poetry and one of the finest "in all poetry." Keats had read Homer in Chapman's translation but could not read him in

<sup>21</sup> I quote the manuscript of the sonnet in Keats's copy of *Endymion* (Dilke Collection).

<sup>22</sup> H. B. Forman, Variorum Edition, Vol. II, p. 206.

Greek. When he accepted Wordsworth's humanitarianism on April 24, he was seized with a passion for knowledge. He could read Latin and French, and he proposed to learn Greek and Italian. He wrote Reynolds on April 27:

I long to feast upon old Homer as we have upon Shakespeare, and as I have lately upon Milton. If you understood Greek, and would read me passages now and then, explaining their meaning, 'twould be, from its mistiness, perhaps a greater luxury than reading the thing one's self. I shall be happy when I can do the same for you.

This passage establishes the date of the sonnet *To Homer* as on or about April 27, 1818. Keats's reference to Homer's blindness reminds us of his comment on Milton's blindness in his copy of *Paradise Lost*. Blindness, he thought, sharpens the imagination, the inner eye, enabling it to see into the realm of spirit.

Keats composed his *Ode to Maia* on May 1, 1818. There is a transcript of the letter to Reynolds on May 3, containing the ode, in Woodhouse's Book of Transcripts of Keats's Letters. There is a transcript of the ode also in Woodhouse's Book of Transcripts, entitled "Ode to May — Fragment" and dated "1 May 1818."

In the letter which he wrote Reynolds on May 3, Keats quoted the ode in the midst of his discussion of the necessity of knowledge to thinking people. With respect to speculation, he said, knowledge comforts us by guiding and reconciling our imaginative intuitions (or sensations). With respect to "human Life and the affections," he continued, "it is impossible to know how far Knowledge will console us for the death of a friend and the ill 'that flesh is heir to.'"

With respect to the affections and Poetry [he added] you must know by a sympathy my thoughts that way; and I dare say these few lines will be but a ratification: I wrote them on May-day — and intend to finish the ode all in good time. —

Mother of Hermes! and still youthful Maia!  
 May I sing to thee  
 As thou wast hymned on the shores of Baiae?  
 Or may I woo thee  
 In earlier Sicilian? or thy smiles  
 Seek as they once were sought, in Grecian isles,  
 By Bards who died content on pleasant sward,  
 Leaving great verse unto a little clan?  
 O, give me their old vigour, and unheard,  
 Save of the quiet Primrose, and the span  
 Of heaven and few ears,  
 Rounded by thee, my song should die away  
 Content as theirs,  
 Rich in the simple worship of a day. —

The *Ode to Maia*, like the sonnet *To Homer*, was inspired by Keats's passion for knowledge. "Standing aloof in giant ignorance," as he expressed it in the sonnet, he longed to know the culture of Greece. He intended to learn the Greek language, he wrote Reynolds on April 27, in order that he might feast upon Greek poetry and philosophy. In the *Ode to Maia* he expressed a longing to compose poetry in the spirit and style of Greek poetry. Reminded of Maia by the season of May, he desired to celebrate her in hymns as she had been celebrated by poets in Baiae, Sicily, and the Greek Isles. He felt his way, with imaginative insight, through the periods of Roman and Sicilian poetry to Greek poetry, the pure and vigorous source of European poetry.

The *Ode to Maia* has the Greek qualities of simplicity, lucidity, quietness, and restraint which Keats was striving to attain in his poetry. It does not reveal the slightest trace of that "heat and fever" of the imagination which he feared and distrusted. "An extensive knowledge is needful to thinking people," he wrote Reynolds on May 3, "— it takes away the heat and fever; and helps, by widening speculation, to ease the Burden of the Mystery."

The *Ode to Maia* is complete in thought and perfect in form, although Keats, at the time at which he composed it, regarded it as incomplete. It represents, as I shall show later, the second stage in his development of the form of the ode out of the form of Spenser's *Epithalamion*. It is complete in its fourteen verses, for Keats was accustomed to express simple intuitions of his experience in the fourteen verses of the sonnet. The shortening of the second, fourth, eleventh, and thirteenth verses makes the metrical pattern of the five last verses repeat that of the five first verses and produces an effect of completeness.

The *Ode to Maia* was the last poem which Keats composed in Teignmouth. Sometime in the first week in May the brothers set out for Hampstead. They travelled by post chaise, for Tom was too ill to make the journey by coach. At Honiton, where their first chaise turned back, Keats wrote a note to Mrs. Jeffrey. "My brother has borne his Journey thus far remarkably well," he reported. On May 17, a few days after they had arrived in Hampstead, Tom Keats wrote Maryann Jeffrey an account of their journey. At Bridport, on their second day's stage, Tom suffered a hæmorrhage, his second one. "I was very ill there," he wrote, "and lost much blood — we travell'd a hundred miles in the last two days. I found myself much better at the end of the journey than when I left *Tartary* alias Teignmouth." He referred to the plans and activities of

his brothers and himself. John was engaged in meeting his friends and in making plans for his pedestrian tour with Brown; and George was busily preparing for his marriage to Miss Wylie and his emigration to America. Tom was so hopeful of his own recovery that he was contemplating a journey to Italy. John and George deceived themselves doubtless into believing that Tom might regain his health and that at least he was in no immediate danger. The plans of the brothers seemed very unwise to many of their friends. Keats wrote Maryann and Sarah Jeffrey on June 4:

They say we are all (that is our set) mad at Hampstead. There's George took unto himself a Wife a Week ago and will in a little time sail for America — and I with a friend am preparing for a four Months Walk all over the North — and belike Tom will not stop here — he has been getting much better. . . .

And George Keats, writing Dilke in 1833, said:

*You* and poor *John* were the only ones who looked upon my American expedition as reasonable and proper. . . .

Speaking for his wife and himself, George Keats added:

Altogether we have been as happy as mortals usually are, had Mrs. Wylie been as wise as Mrs. R. she would have crushed in the bud a reasonable portion of human happiness, and there would not have been any little Keatses.

The intense pride which was characteristic of the Keats brothers caused Keats to approve of George's "resolution to emigrate to the back Settlements of America." He wrote Bailey on May 28:

[George] is of too independant and liberal a Mind to get on in trade in this Country — in which a generous Man with a scanty recourse [resource] must be ruined. I would sooner he should till the ground than bow to a Customer — there is no choice with him, he could not bring himself to the latter. I would not consent to his going alone — no; but that objection is done away with — he will marry before he sets sail a young Lady he has known some years — of a nature liberal and highspirited enough to follow him to the Banks of the Mississipp[p]i.

Keats was profoundly depressed, however, by his brother's emigration:

I have this morning such a Lethargy that I cannot write [he confessed to Bailey]. . . . I am now so depressed that I have not an Idea to put to paper — my hand feels like lead — and yet it is and [an] unpleasant numbness it does not take away the pain of existence.

And on June 1 he wrote Bailey:

I feel no spur at my Brother's going to America, and am almost stony-hearted about his wedding.

In reply to Bailey's urgent invitation to visit him at Oxford, he said:

My Brother talks of sailing in a fortnight if so I will most probably be with you a week before I set out for Scotland. The middle of your first page should be sufficient to rouse me - what I said is true and I have dreamt of your mention of it and my not a[n]swering it has weighed on me since. If I come, I will bring your Letter and hear more fully your sentiments on one or two points. . . . I hope I shall soon see you for we must have many new thoughts and feelings to analyze, and to discover whether a little more knowledge has not made us more ignorant.

The thought of this passage is somewhat of a riddle, for we do not have Bailey's letter to which Keats referred; but I believe we can interpret Keats's thought. He had been corresponding with Bailey, who was a Christian humanitarian, about philosophy, especially about Wordsworth's humanitarianism. (In November 1817 he discussed with Bailey the problem of the imagination, defining his own mind as imaginative and Bailey's, which was like Wordsworth's, as both imaginative and rational, and trying to remove Bailey's doubt of the authenticity of the imagination. At the end of April 1818, when he himself doubted the authenticity of the imagination and accepted Wordsworth's principles of knowledge and reason as checks upon it, he explained his change in philosophy in a letter to Reynolds and also, it is probable, in a letter to Bailey. In the first part of May, Bailey replied, discussing Keats's acceptance of Wordsworth's philosophy. And, in the letter from which I quoted above, Keats referred to Bailey's comments upon the principles of humanitarianism. He desired to visit Bailey and to hear more fully his sentiments on one or two points. "I hope I shall soon see you," he said, "for we must have many new thoughts and feelings to analyze, and to discover whether a little more knowledge has not made us more ignorant."

Keats himself became ill in the first part of June. He wrote Severn on June 6 that he was confined to his room by the orders of his physician, and he wrote Bailey on June 10 that Tom's illness and his own indisposition might prevent him from going on his pedestrian tour into Scotland. This indisposition, probably a sore throat, was his second warning that consumption was seizing upon him, but he of course did not recognize it.

In the letter which he wrote Bailey on June 10, Keats tested Wordsworth's optimistic humanitarianism by his own experience of the ill "that flesh is heir to." He cherished grandiose humanitarian ideals (he placed his ultimate in the glory of dying for a great human purpose); but he despaired of happiness for himself.



I am never alone [he wrote Bailey] without rejoicing that there is such a thing as death — without placing my ultimate in the glory of dying for a great human purpose. Perhaps if my affairs were in a different state I should not have written the above — you shall judge — I have two Brothers one is driven by the “burden of Society” to America[;] the other, with an exquisite love of Life, is in a lingering state. My Love for my Brothers from the early loss of our parents and even for earlier Misfortunes has grown into a[n] affection “passing the Love of Women”— I have been ill temper’d with them, I have vex’d them — but the thought of them has always stifled the impression that any woman might otherwise have made upon me. I have a Sister too and may not follow them either to America or to the Grave — Life must be undergone, and I certainly derive a consolation from the thought of writing one or two more Poems before it ceases.

Keats discussed with Bailey again the problem of the imagination. His imagination had made him unhappy by giving him an insight into the evil in nature, and he decided that, since his sister-in-law was happy, she must lack imagination.

To see an entirely disinterested Girl quite happy [he said] is the most pleasant and extraordinary thing in the world — it depends upon a thousand Circumstances — on my word ’tis extraordinary. Women must want Imagination and they may thank God for it — and so m[a]y we that a delicate being can feel happy without any sense of crime. It puzzles me and I have no sort of Logic to comfort me — I shall think it over.

There is no evidence that Keats composed any poetry in Hampstead in the second half of May and the first half of June 1818. He was resolved, we have seen, not to compose a long poem until he had acquired more knowledge and wisdom by studying and travelling. He changed his intuition of the “Fall of Hyperion” to conform to the humanitarian philosophy which he accepted at the end of April, but he did not begin the composition of the humanitarian version of the poem, it is probable, in this period. And he was too excited and depressed by his brother’s marriage and emigration to America to compose even short lyrics.